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Reading the subversive in contemporary Greek women's fiction.

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READING THE SUBVERSIVE
IN CONTEMPORARY GREEK WOMEN'S FICTION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the subversive as it can be read in contemporary Greek women's fiction. In view of the unprecedented quantity and popularity of fictions written by women in Greece during past two decades, the Introduction outlines the issues involved in creating a critical discourse in which to discuss women's writing, both within the field of feminist studies, and within the critical debates that have recently preoccupied literary studies in Greece. After reviewing the reluctant attitude of both criticism and women writers themselves towards the term 'women's literature', I employ Nancy Miller's 'language of textiles', and, in a brief discussion of E. Fakinou's novel *To Εβδομο Ρούχο* and Isak Dinesen's short story 'The Blank Page', I attempt to show how the implication of gender in the relationship between the production of texts and creativity subverts the stereotypical association of authorship and masculinity.

Then I discuss in detail five texts that assume multiple and contradictory, but consistently subversive, positions in relation to different hegemonic discursive systems. Specifically, Chapter 1 examines the way Zyranna Zateli's short story 'Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστική' (1984) subverts stereotypical representations of female sexuality; Chapter 2 explores the subversion of the notion of Origin and the Apocalyptic in Margarita Karapanou's novel *Ο Υπνοβάτης* (1985); Chapter 3 deals with the individual's relation to history in Rea Galanaki's novel *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* (1989); Chapter 4 analyses the metafictionally subversive use of language in Iro Stavraki's novel *Αλμα* (1989); and Chapter 5 examines the interdependence of language and subjectivity in Neni Efthymiadi's novel *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* (1988).

I conclude by arguing that the texts discussed take the writing process as part of their subject matter. Their subversiveness is shown to lie in the figuration of a gendered creative subject position, [be it reader, writer or text] which is portrayed more as a process put into play by narratives, than as a product that rests at the end of a quest.

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INTRODUCTION

Η Χειραφεσία μας, αν της λείπουν τύποι,
κατ' ουσία έγινε, τίποτε δεν λείπει,
κάπισμα, ξεσπήτωμα, συρ' εδώ κι' εκεί
καφφενές, ποδήλατο και πολιτική,
βίος ανεξάρτητος, προκοπής προοίμιον.
Μπόρσα, λέσχη, μπακαράς, επιστήμης νάματα,
κι' εγγραφή και φοίτησις στο Πανεπιστήμιον,
μήπως εύρωμεν γαμπρούς, που τιμούν τα γράμματα.
Πρέπ' η γυναίκα και μπορεί να γίνετ' επιστήμων
από σοφήν εμβρίθειαν κι' από σπουδὴν εγκύμων;
Βεβαίως ναι κι' ο νους πολὺς κι' η κρίσις οὐκ ολίγη
και τα μυαλά των γυναικῶν
βαρύτερα των ανδρικῶν
τα βρίσκουνε στο ζύγι.
Αλλά κι αν φθάσουν τ' ἀφθαστα της επιστήμης βάθη
τα φυσικά της ένστικτα καμμιὰ δεν θα ξεμάθει
και πάντοτε θα προτιμά και θα θηρεύει φήμην
μᾶλλον δι' ωραιότητα παρά δι' επιστήμην.

Χειραφέτησις, G. Souris (n.d)

In the past two decades, Greece has seen such an unprecedented emergence of fictions written by women, that the phenomenon is frequently referred to as an 'explosion'. This explosion of women's writing has also enjoyed what, by Greek standards, is considered to be an astonishing success, since the numerous editions that many of those books are still going through suggest their increasing popularity with the reading public.

This 'explosion' is not unrelated to the cultural and political context that emerged after the fall of the dictatorship. Political

freedom was soon followed by the manifestation of a cultural phenomenon that is crucial to the subsequent analysis of the proliferation of women's fiction nowadays. The years 1978 to 1985 saw a considerable and polymorphous presence of publications with a feminist character which has been called "φεμινιστική άνοιξη"¹. The beginning of this era is marked by the publication in 1978 of the newspaper of the "Women's Liberation Movement" (Κίνηση για την Απελευθέρωση των Γυναικών) and its end in 1985 is marked by the publication of the last issue of the periodical Gaia which was devoted to the "Panhellenic Women's Meeting" in Thessaloniki in October the previous year. The common characteristic of the plethora of the various women's magazines, brochures and newsletters of this period is an exploration of new and sometimes daring ways to provide an alternative reading of the position of women in Greek society. The feminist concerns of these publications, however, are mainly focused on anti-capitalist points of view and therefore provide only party-related versions of the best road to women's equality and freedom of choice.

Gradually, a transformation appeared not only as far as the thematic choices were concerned but also in terms of the need to place them in a broader theoretical feminist context. Thus, mainly through the last two issues of the periodical Skoupa and the first (and only) issue of the periodical Sfigga² one can detect

¹See Kotsovelou, Repousi 1988:53-60.

²The periodical Σκούπα, για το γυναικείο ζήτημα published five issues in

a shift from the perception of the women's movement as a branch of masculine party-political activism, towards the desire for a feminist movement that tries to find its own, autonomous way: "Η άρνηση αυτού του ανδρικού λόγου, της ανδρικής ματιάς, του ανδρικού μετρήματος του αγώνα μας είναι η προϋπόθεση της γυναικείας μας πάλης" ('Σχόλιο' 1980:39).

The years after the 1981 elections which ushered in the PASOK government and saw the change of the Family Law (1982) and the Civil Law (1983) were followed by a renewed disillusionment of women's groups with party politics which was marked by the opening of women's bookshops in Athens and the presence of independent feminist publications whose character ranges from lesbian politics to scientific essays.³ However, despite the fact that the "Panhellenic Women's Meeting" in Thessaloniki in October 1984 heard women from political as well as independent organisations agree about the need to redefine the autonomous character of the Greek feminist movement, the apparent identity crisis found an easy solution in the return to party-political "feminist" argumentation as expressed in the second and last issue, in 1985, of the magazine Gaia, devoted to the Thessaloniki meeting.

January 1979, June 1979, December 1979, July 1980 and July 1981. The periodical Σφίγγα, φεμινιστικά και άλλα only published one issue in July 1980.

³See Kotsovelou, Repousi 1988:58.

Meanwhile, a large amount of prose fiction written by men and women was being published and was finding favour with a hitherto unknown readership. In addition, as those texts were mostly written by relatively unknown writers who met with critical acclaim through narratives that were mainly about individuals and their personal stories, articles began to appear that explored the presence of what was defined as "The new writers", or "The new prose-literature".⁴

In February 1982, the literary magazine Diavazo made the first attempt to bring those new (νεότερους και νεότατους) writers to the public eye. In a special issue devoted to "Δεκαοχτώ λογοτέχνες της νεότερης γενιάς" both women and men writers were interviewed but "women-related" concerns were not raised in the questions except in the case of Maro Vamvounaki and Katerina Plassara.⁵ In May 1983 and in February 1984, Diavazo repeated the presentation of the 'new writers', with a difference: all women writers (and only the women) were asked to give their thoughts on the existence or not of a women's literature.

The questions about 'women's literature' that surface in the 1980s and which mainly answer to the need to explore the significance of the strong presence of women among the new and successful writers, unavoidably lead to a debate concerning the general implications of the term 'women's writing'. The main

⁴See Kourtovik 1990:61.

⁵See Vamvounaki 1982:45 and Plassara 1982:75.

arguments of the ongoing debate revolve around the notion that literary difference is an implication, or a direct 'translation' of the original sexual difference between men and women. Thus, even for those who are aware of the recent theoretical assertions that proclaim the author dead, the fact that a book is written by a woman becomes indicative of a need to treat it as a special or separate case. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is the case that one can often find women writers needing to make it clear that they do not write as women, or that they are writers first and women second. As R. Parkin-Gounelas observes, in relation to English women writers who have made similar claims, one has "only to think of the unlikelihood of a male writer asking to be thought of as a writer first and a man second to understand the pervasiveness of the association between authorship and masculinity" (1991:22).

The answers of the women writers interviewed in Diavazo reveal most of them reluctant to take a definite stance on the issue, mainly for fear of endangering the struggles for equality as becomes apparent from the comment by A. Frantzi. Although she admits that "θα μου άρεσε πολύ ένας ισχυρισμός ότι υπάρχει [γυναικεία λογοτεχνία] γιατί κάτι τέτοιο θα σήμαινε την ξεχωριστή μας ύπαρξη" she is quick to point out its implications: "αλλά το πράγμα σκοντάφτει στους σχετικούς κοινωνικούς αγώνες. Και αν με συγχωρέσουν οι φεμινίστριες [...] Ο καυγάς για γυναικείο ή ανδρικό λόγο είναι ο καυγάς για το πάπλωμα που δεν έχουμε νομίζω" (1983:53). On the same track, among those interviewed believing that there is no reason to argue for the existence of women's literature, is P. Geronimaki

who said that if one "ισχυρίζεται πως υπάρχει (γυναικεία λογοτεχνία) μου φαίνεται πως ο ισχυρισμός από κάπου χάνει [...] αλλιώς θα έπρεπε διαβάζοντας ένα κείμενο να μαντεύεις αμέσως το φύλο του συγγραφέα"(1984:13). E. Sotiropoulou is even more certain that the distinction is impossible because, "δεν υπάρχει ανδρική και γυναικεία λογοτεχνία. Δεν είναι τυχαίο ότι τον τόσο θηλυκό μονόλογο της Μόλλυ τον έγραψε ένας άνδρας γιατί στη λογοτεχνία τα μόνα που μετράνε είναι το ταλέντο και η δουλειά."(1983: 51).

Behind the belief that we cannot speak of a women's literature lies the conception that the writer as artist is always over and above gender differences: the Writer is bisexual, hermaphrodite or even androgynous in Virginia Woolf's sense. Thus, E. Ladia says that "υπάρχει λογοτεχνία που υπηρετείται από άνδρες κι από γυναίκες όπως παλαιότερα ιερείς και ιέρειες υπηρετούσαν τους ναούς. Γιά να μην πω κάτι περισσότερο· ο καλλιτέχνης είναι διανοητικά δίφυλος" (1984: 30). A. Deligiorgi believes that "όσοι γράφουν όταν γράφουν είναι ερμαφρόδιτοι" and therefore "μια λογοτεχνία που θα οριζόταν είτε ανδρική είτε γυναικεία θάταν μία λογοτεχνία για πάντα λειψή"(1983: 24), while N. Efthymiadi is most specific on this point: "Πιστεύω στον ερμαφροδιτισμό του γραπτού λόγου[...] αν και προτιμώ τη λέξη ουδετερότητα γιατί ενώ ο ερμαφροδιτισμός προϋποθέτει τα δύο φύλα η ουδετερότητα μοιάζει να τα καταργεί.[...]Τέλος αν μιλάμε για γυναικεία και κατά συνέπεια και ανδρική λογοτεχνία επειδή τα έργα γράφτηκαν από γυναίκες αδιαφορώντας για το πόσο οι συγγραφείς χρησιμοποίησαν ερμαφρόδιτη ή ουδέτερη σκέψη τότε το κριτήριο γίνεται τόσο τυπικό και ανεπαρκές ώστε αυτοκαταργείται" (1984:19-20).

The suggestion is that for the most part the term women's literature is dismissed, in favour of a literature which has no need for gender classification, a literature that is sex-neutral, non-prejudiced and all-inclusive. However, N. Hatzidaki brings up the question of gender in the debate, while still upholding the belief that there is only 'one' literature. In her opinion, literature can be distinguished as masculine or feminine irrespective of the sex of the writer: "Πιστεύω ότι υπάρχουν πράγματα που χαρακτηρίζουν και επομένως διαχωρίζουν όχι την γυναικεία λογοτεχνία από την ανδρική αλλά την θηλυκή από την αρσενική". The rather unfortunate gender distinction that she proposes is based on what she sees as specifically feminine and masculine forms of writing: "Το δοκίμιο και η κριτική, σαν είδος, είναι το κατ' εξοχήν αρσενικό.[...] Όσο για το μυθιστόρημα στις πιο πρόσφατες μορφές του είναι το κατ' εξοχήν θηλυκό[...] ακόμα κι αν το γράφουν άνδρες[...] τα μυθιστορήματα σίγουρα χωρίζονται σε θηλυκά και αρσενικά[...] και σε μικτά" (1983: 57).

In the same interviews, though, there are those women writers who see a need for the distinction of a women's writing that will serve to put forth feminine values in order to undermine male dominance. Among them is L. Seferiadi, who specifically argues that "ακρογωνιαίος λίθος της λογοτεχνίας εκείνης που θα μπορούσε ίσως να χαρακτηριστεί γυναικεία πρέπει να είναι η αμφισβήτηση του ανδρικού συστήματος αξιών που επίκεντρό του έχει την εξουσία[...] από αυτήν κυρίως την σκοπιά θα μπορούσα να πω ότι γράφω γυναικεία κι ίσως με το γράψιμό μου συμβάλλω κι εγώ απειροελάχιστα στην προσπάθεια των γυναικών να απαγκιστρωθούν από τα αντρικά πρότυπα και

να προβάλλουν δικές τους αξίες" (1983:37). A. Vorning appears to share Seferiadi's view when she says that "η απομάκρυνση από την ανδροκεντρική ιδεολογία[...] είναι το βασικό γνώρισμα της γυναικείας λογοτεχνίας. Η γυναικεία γραφή που προσπαθεί να εκφράσει το γυναικείο φύλο σαν κάτι άλλο από μια θεσμοποιημένη κατάρα, το κείμενο, που αποκαλύπτει ότι οι κανόνες και οι παραδόσεις που δημιουργεί το πατριαρχικό σύστημα δεν ανταποκρίνονται στη στοιχειώδη ανάγκη της γυναίκας για αυτοπραγμάτωση κάνει μια ανατομία στη βαθιά ντροπιαστική σιωπή που τυλίγει ακόμα το ήμισυ του ανθρωπίνου γένους." (1984:11)

The general reluctance to argue for the existence of women's literature on the part of the Greek women writers mentioned above, and their eagerness to proceed to a neutralization of sex-differences in the texts they write, is so profound that one thesis that has recently been written for a D.Phil degree, and one book that has recently been published have explored the crucial question of the different character of Greek women's literature, and have felt compelled, as this thesis does, to account for the hesitation in defining the work of Greek women writers as 'women's writing'.⁶ George Thalassitis argues

⁶ The thesis is Karen Rhoads Van Dyck's doctoral dissertation on *The Poetics of Censorship in Greek Poetry since 1967* (1990), which explores the relation between writing and censorship in contemporary Greek poetry by women, and the book is *Η Αρνηση του Λόγου στο Ελληνικό μυθιστόρημα μετά το 1974* by G. Thalassitis (1992) which discusses women's writing, and offers psychoanalytic and feminist readings of novels by both men and women. Apart from those two texts, the last decade has also seen four independent publications that deal with what could be

that the hesitation arises because, in view of the feminist struggles,

ο χαρακτηρισμός [...] μιας μερίδας της λογοτεχνίας ως γυναικείας προσβάλλει, ως εκ τούτου, τα δικαιώματα της γυναίκας για ισότητα. Το πιο αφοπλιστικό επιχείρημα για αυτήν την ισότητα είναι το ότι η γυναίκα μπορεί να κάνει εξίσου καλά ό,τι κάνει και ο άνδρας. Αυτό αποδεινύεται καθημερινά από το γεγονός ότι όλο και πιο συχνά λέμε η συγγραφέας, η αρχιτέκτονας, η βουλευτής, η αστυφύλακας [...] Και είναι τόσο μεγάλη η ανάγκη των γυναικών να διαφοροποιηθούν από τον ένα και μόνο κοινωνικό ρόλο της συζύγου και μητέρας, ώστε να ανέχονται και ίσως να επιδιώκουν όλες αυτές τις καταλήξεις, που τους παρέχουν ισοτιμία σε μια κοινωνία ανδροκρατούμενη [...] Η ισότητα των δύο φύλων κερδίζει καθημερινά έδαφος με την ασφαλέστατη μέθοδο της εξωμείωσης. (1992:133)

Karen Van Dyck has argued that Greek women's reluctance to

broadly called 'women's issues': R.Kaklamanaki's *Η Θέση της Ελληνίδας* (1984), A.Lendakis' *Είναι η Γυναίκα Κατώτερη από τον Άντρα; ή πώς κατασκευάζεται η Γυναίκα* (1986), E.Varika's *Η Εξέγερση των Κυριών* (1987) and a special issue of *Diavazo* entitled "Το Ελληνικό Φεμινιστικό Εντυπο". The main concern of the first two studies (Kaklamanaki and Lendakis) is the assertion and assurance, for party more than for political reasons, that women in Greece are finally equal with men and that the struggles of the revival of the feminist movement in the 1980's have paid off. The other two studies, (Varika and *Diavazo*) attempt to define and trace the evolution of attitudes, tactics and scopes in women's writing through an examination of feminist newspapers and magazines from the nineteenth century up to the mid-Eighties.

claim Greek women's writing as a positive distinction is "perhaps more the result of an outmoded critical apparatus than a reflection of the contribution these writers have made to writing in the 1980s.[...] The resistance to the idea of women's writing seems left over from a time when women's writing was viewed as restrictive rather than liberating" (1990:359).

Outmoded or not, the pervasive attitude that underlies criticism of women's texts and women's writing in Greece is largely dismissive and suspicious, entrenched in deeply traditional canonical values. Thus, although contemporary critics (male for the most part) have kept an eye open for the plethora of fiction written by women in recent years, and although they have reviewed many of the new books, they have condemned most of them, have praised a mere handful, and have engaged in fierce arguments over the literary value of one or two of them. Positive appraisal mostly comes for texts that appear, in the critic's eyes, to concern themselves with things not specifically feminine; they are the books that are definitely not written "για μας κορίτσια" as D.Kourtovik put it (1989). The old assumption that a book written by a man is a book, whereas a book written by a woman is a woman's book, summarizes the attitude of the critics who are ready to proclaim the difference of women's writing, in so far as it is perceived as a negative distinction which can be detected by the 'effeminate' narrative style of women writers and the feminine thematic choices.

This thesis enters the discussion in order to explore the

implications that emerge from reading fiction written by contemporary Greek women writers. In order to explore the implications that arise from situating Greek women's writing in the broader cultural and literary perspective discussed so far, and in order to create a context for the subsequent discussion of specific texts, the rest of this chapter will develop in the following way: In the absence of a concurrent debate on women's literature between writers and critics, I will first construct a dialogue between a 1989 article written by Demosthenes Kourtovik entitled 'Η Γυναικεία Λογοτεχνία', which I consider typical of the attitude of critics towards women's literature, and the transcripts of the 1990 discussion that explored the question *Υπάρχει, λοιπόν, γυναικεία ποίηση*; in which five contemporary Greek women poets presented their views and which were published in a short book with the same title.⁷ By

⁷The discussion "Πέντε Ποιήτριες συζητούν: Υπάρχει, λοιπόν, γυναικεία ποίηση;" which took place on the 17th of February 1990, and whose transcripts were published in the same year, was organised by the Εταιρεία Σπουδών Νεοελληνικού Πολιτισμού και Γενικής Παιδείας of the Moraites school in Athens, will hereafter be referred to as 'the discussion'. Although, the theme of discussion was women's poetry, the writers make it clear that they do not see their views as applying differently to prose writing, and therefore the debate is relevant to this thesis. Furthermore, it should be noted that although several terms were used during the discussion, i.e. 'γυναικεία γραφή', 'γυναικελός λόγος', etc, in this analysis they are contained in the broader category of 'women's writing' or 'women's literature', which refers to texts written by women.

means of this enforced dialogue, it will be argued that, in the face of critics who have regrettably remained largely dismissive of texts written by women, a shift has recently occurred among women writers themselves, who gradually appear to be more willing to explore the distinction of women's literature as an empowering one. Secondly, after showing that what emerges as the desideratum of this dialogue is a need to define the identity of the female writing subject, I will explore the theoretical implications of the relationship between the production of texts and female creativity through employing Nancy Miller's "language of textiles". Thirdly, I will briefly compare Evgenia Fakinou's *Το Έβδομο Ρούχο* to Isak Dinesen's 'The Blank Page' in order to show how texts may either propagate or subvert the stereotypical association of creativity and masculinity. And finally, I will discuss the specific issues involved in the discussion of the texts that will follow in the rest of the thesis.

In the 1990 discussion, Rea Galanaki chose to present her views in the form of ten questions, of which the penultimate was "γιατί στην Ελλάδα, απ' όσο τουλάχιστον ξέρω, οι περισσότερες γυναίκες που γράφουν αρνούνται πως υπάρχει γυναικεία γραφή;"(1990:42). The answer must lie in the fact that the general consensus is that all literature, especially all good literature, is fundamentally the same, and therefore to admit that a book written by a woman can be considered as part of the category of women's literature is to imply an inherent deficiency. The instant engendering and thus devaluation, of a book because of its writer's sex is apparent in Demosthenes Kourtovik's article,

titled 'Η Γυναικεία Λογοτεχνία',⁸ in which he defines literature written by women as a different category, in terms of thematic and stylistic limitations that make it deviate from the norm of literature in general, that is from literature written by men. From the vast number of books written by women after 1974, which he implicitly dismisses as part of women's literature, he only excludes Margarita Karapanou's *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, and in so doing he comes into conflict "με την κρατούσα άποψη ανάμεσα στους κριτικούς", quite daringly, even if he says so.

This choice is not based on the aesthetic perfection of the book, which in fact, apart from being 'πολυχλεύαστο' is also 'άνισο', but on the observation that according to Kourtovik's criteria, "η Μαργαρίτα Καραπάνου είναι η μόνη πεζογράφος της μεταπολιτευτικής περιόδου που δεν έπεσε στην παγίδα της γυναικείας γραφής και της γυναικείας θεματολογίας, αλλά έγραψε ένα μυθιστόρημα τοποθετημένο σε μια πλατύτερη προοπτική και οπωσδήποτε όχι για μας κορίτσια". The broader perspective that he assigns to Margarita Karapanou's novel (which will be discussed in detail and to a very different effect in the second chapter) concerns what in his view appears to be the refusal to preoccupy itself with things feminine. I assume that Kourtovik's perception of the male protagonist Manolis and of the theological undertone of the narrative, provide the text with the necessary degree of 'universality' that makes it of interest to an audience broader than the cocooned world of

⁸ All citations of D. Kourtovik's views come from the article published in the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* on the 12th of July 1989.

women readers.

It is interesting to note that Kourtovik's choice of the words "δεν έπεσε στην παγίδα" which define the success that Margarita Karapanou was in danger of not achieving, has also surfaced in the discourse of the criticism⁹ related to Rea Galanaki's *Ο Βλος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* (which will be discussed in the third chapter). Being a novel whose main character is not only male but a high ranking general as well, it satisfies Kourtovik's necessary condition for the broader area that lies outside the "γυναικεία θεματολογία".

Although critics have for the most part praised Galanaki's treatment of the historical Ismail Ferik Pasha, they also did not fail to praise her success in avoiding the trap of what S. Tsaknias calls "ψυχολογία του πάθους"(1989). C. Papageorgiou is even more specific when he suggestively argues that in this case "η συγγραφέας χειριζόμενη ένα θέμα κατ' εξοχήν αντρικό κατάφερε να νικήσει την θηλυκή της φύση και να μην πέσει στην παγίδα του μελό και της εύκολης συναισθηματικότητας"(1989). It is clear both for Karapanou's as well as for Galanaki's texts, that the trap the critics refer to becomes irrevocably linked with the feminine element that seems to characterize women's writing; the trap appears to be defined by the 'objective' gaze of the critics as a flaw in their nature that women writers constantly have to fight

⁹I refer to Tsaknias' and Papageorgiou's articles that were both published in October 1989 whereas Kourtovik's article was published in July of the same year.

against and strive to conquer if their writing is to be seen to have any value.

Thus, Kourtovik, presenting himself as a person who "στοχάζεται πάνω στη φύση της λογοτεχνίας και πιστεύει στην ανανέωσή της", excuses his uncertainty as to whether this writing 'for us girls' is an inherent characteristic of women's discourse or a result of particular social coincidences, while at the same time he reassures us of his conviction that it is precisely the aforementioned and condemned kind of writing by women that guarantees its commercial success. He concludes his article by expressing his satisfaction with the fact that "σήμερα στην Ελλάδα όλο και περισσότερες γυναίκες όχι μόνο γράφουν αλλά και αναγνωρίζονται και καταξιώνονται ως συγγραφείς" and by advising all Greek women writers, in what seems like an ultimatum, that "κανείς και κυρίως καμμιά δεν πρέπει να ξεχνάει ότι οι μεγάλες γυναικείες μορφές της παγκόσμιας λογοτεχνίας δεν έμειναν στην ιστορία των γραμμάτων επειδή έγραψαν σαν γυναίκες". Kourtovik's advice does not allocate any space to the female writing subject, except the one that is consistent with the male-defined norm. Women, in his view, should therefore write as men, not as the gendered¹⁰ subjects of

¹⁰ The words 'gender'/'gendered' are used in this thesis to emphasize the social and cultural, as opposed to the biological distinction between the sexes (See Fuss 1989). The words 'engender'/'engendering' are intended in this thesis to indicate a broader process, or a discursive mechanism of introducing gender-related connotations to hitherto unaffected notions, for example in patriarchal notions of the writing subject or the universal individual (See Robinson 1991).

patriarchy, but as what G. Thalassis has called collaborators with the enemy, "δοσίλογοι" (1992:134), in order to be valued enough to become part of the canon.

Contemporary women writers are aware of the limitations allocated by male critics to their work, because, as A. Frantzi argues in the discussion, the fact that the writer of a book is female is stressed when a critic wants to dismiss her work as of limited value: "για γυναίκα καλή είναι και αποσιωπάται, όταν ακριβώς θέλει η κριτική να υπογραμμίσει την ποιότητα του έργου μιας γυναίκας, οπότε την συγκρίνει με έργα μεγάλων ανδρών[...] και αφήνει να εννοηθεί ότι δεν γράφει σαν γυναίκα. Οι γυναίκες, όταν η κριτική θέλει να τις επαινέσει, γίνονται ρωμαλέες και, όταν θέλει να τις υποσκάψει, γίνονται νάρκισσοι"(1990:13).

In terms of what has been argued so far, Kourtovik's remark that "η έκρηξη της γυναικείας λογοτεχνίας (εδώ χρησιμοποιώ τον όρο με την στοιχειακή σημασία του 'λογοτεχνία που γράφεται από γυναίκες) στην μεταπολιτευτική περίοδο δεν φαίνεται να συνοδεύτηκε από αξιόλογη διεύρυνση της προβληματικής των Ελληνίδων συγγραφέων" should come as no surprise, since he simply detects a lack of dilation of perspective that would enable these texts to have a more universal interest and therefore become part of what is generally and traditionally defined by men as literature. In his view, the problem lies in the women writers' preoccupation with feminine issues, that is issues of concern to women only, which he specifies as being characteristics of literature written by women "σε γενικές γραμμές εξακολουθεί να κυριαρχεί ο παροιμιώδης

γυναικεύς ερμητισμός, η αναζήτηση της γυναικείας ταυτότητας, το πρόβλημα της συνειννόησης με το άλλο φύλο. Πρόκειται για μια λογοτεχνία ενδοστρεφή, που ανεξάρτητα από την αισθητική ή κοινωνιολογική αξία της, αναφέρεται σε έναν λίγο πολύ κλειστό κόσμο".

The assertion that literature written by women has a limited scope is personal, emotional and subjective as connoted by Kourtovik's appeal to the "παροιμιώδης γυναικεύς ερμητισμός" is in itself the monumental stereotype which, as it will be argued later in this thesis, contemporary Greek women's fiction sets out to subvert. At present, it is sufficient to argue that, judging from the recently published views of the women writers, there appears to be a general consensus among them which refutes the dismissive attitude of criticism, and which can therefore be construed as an answer to Kourtovik's assertions. In the discussion of 1990, A. Frantzi observes "την αμφισβήτηση με την οποία περιβάλλεται και διατυπώνεται ο όρος αυτός", because what is defined as women's writing is the kind of literature "που επιλέγει τα θέματά της από τον παραδοσιακό ή έστω και από τον αναθεωρημένο σύγχρονο ρόλο της γυναίκας, αν δηλαδή μυρίζει κουζίνα ή μπιμπερό, αλλά και αν είναι μαχόμενη στο φεμινισμό[...] η υπέρμετρη συναισθηματική έκφραση, που είτε ως πλαδαρή φλυαρία είτε/και ως αμήχανη γραφή[...] παραπέμπ[ει] με αυτονόητο, σχεδόν, τρόπο σε στερεότυπες απόψεις για τις γυναίκες. Ο χαρακτηρισμός αυτός καταλήγει να γίνεται μειωτικός, γιατί, κατά κανόνα, εκφέρεται με κάποια δόση μεγαλόθυμης επιείκειας για τις γυναίκες"(1990:13). Criticism's negative axiological connotations of the term women's writing are also obvious to K. Anghelaki-Rooke, who remarks that the world of women "θεωρείται κατώτερος ή

επικίνδυνος[...] τελικά το γραφτό που θα βγεί -αν βγεί- θα είναι 'ποιοτικά' κατώτερο. Και ξέρουμε ποιοι είναι συνήθως οι χαρακτηρισμοί: 'συναισθηματολογίες, έλλειψη δομής, επιφανειακότητα' κ.λπ..."(1990:25), whereas in the same discussion, A. Papadaki adds that "η θηλυκή λογοτεχνική παραγωγή αντιμετωπίζεται με συγκατάβαση, κάτι σαν δεύτερης κατηγορίας συναισθηματολογία"(1990:45).

As the attitude of criticism towards women's literature is seen as something of a cliché, women writers in the discussion perceive of their difference on the whole in a positive way, and even if they do not celebrate it, they at least appear to be determined to recognize its existence.¹¹ Thus, R. Galanaki says that "θεωρώ τον διαχωρισμό 'Γυναικεία' και 'Αντρική' λογοτεχνία[...] κύριο"(1990:37), whereas A. Frantzi argues that "είναι, πάντως, γεγονός ότι εδώ και είκοσι, 'το λιγώτερο', χρόνια οι γυναίκες[...] στον τόπο μας παρουσιάζονται, αριθμητικά αλλά και ποιοτικά, με έργο όχι μόνο ανταγωνιστικό προς αυτό των ανδρών ομοτέχνων τους αλλά κυρίως με έργο που διαφέρει[...] αυτό που γνωρίζουμε μόνο είναι το κυρίαρχο συναίσθημα πως διαφέρουμε από τους άντρες και αυτοί αντιστοίχως το ίδιο

¹¹ I say on the whole because of the five poets that took part in the discussion the views of the poet Pavlina Pamboudi take a different stance. She says that "δε χρειάζεται να μας απασχολεί η ύπαρξη ή μη γυναικείας ποίησης περισσότερο απ' όσο η ύπαρξη ή μη ποίησης ποιητών με μεγάλη μύτη ή ποίησης ποιητών με αμυγδαλές"(1990:55), and in that sense, her view that "η ποίηση είναι απλώς καλή, κακή ή μέτρια και το φύλλο του γράφοντος είναι το τελευταίο που επηρεάζει την ποιότητά της"(1990:56) is closer to the views presented by those writers interviewed in the 'New Writers' issues of Diavazo in 1983, 1984.

γνωρίζουν"(1990:15,17).

Recognition of the difference of women's literature, by the women writers, is a complex one, because critics have made them aware, as K Anghelaki-Rooke says, that "αμέσως μόλις και αν παραδεχτούμε ότι η γυναικεία γραφή διαφοροποιείται απ' αυτή των αντρών, αυτόματα μπαίνει και το θέμα της αξίας"(1990:24). Although she dismisses the axiologically gendered arguments through a carefully chosen metaphor of the uselessness of trying to distinguish and categorize the value of a cucumber and a cauliflower on a hierarchical scale, she nevertheless admits the danger and the temptation of turning assertions of the difference of women's literature into qualitative claims by reversing criticism's generic limitations. She cautions that, despite her belief that texts written by women "διαφέρουν σε σύσταση, σαν οργανισμός κι οργάνωση από τα ανδρικά, δεν θα πρέπει να οδηγηθούμε σε απολυτοσύνες και σχηματοποίηση"(1990:25). R. Galanaki agrees, and takes the argument further by dismissing the stereotypical representation of women's literature as a "θεματικό και μορφολογικό γκέτο", wondering about the restrictive implications of a narrow definition "που εμπεριέχει τον κίνδυνο ενός φυλετικού διαχωρισμού, που - σαν φυλετικός- είναι πολύ πιο ανελαστικός και από έναν ταξικό διαχωρισμό"(1990:40).

Returning to Kourtovik's critical dismissal of the limited scope of women writers who deal with the "αναζήτηση της γυναικείας ταυτότητας", contemporary women writers in 1990 argue for the importance of what A. Vorning in 1984 called "στοιχειώδη[s]

ανάγκη της γυναίκας για αυτοπραγμάτωση"(11). A. Frantzi says it lies precisely in the need to define women's identity in which one can locate the specificity of women's writing, because "αυτό που παράγεται κάθε φορά δεν μπορεί παρά να εκφράσει αποσπασματικά τον κόσμο μας, το υποκείμενο δηλαδή". As for Kourtovik's assertion that texts written by women over-indulge themselves "[σ]το πρόβλημα της συνεννόησης με το άλλο φύλο", A. Papadaki comes to reassure him by saying that for a contemporary women writer "η ρήξη[...] με το αντίθετο φύλο δεν μπορεί να αποτελέσει μόνιμη θεματική, όσο βασανιστικό ή οδυνηρό και αν είναι το βίωμα. Προχωρεί σε κάτι πιο ατομικό και γι' αυτό πιο πολύτιμο[...] Οργανώνοντας σε ποιητική ύλη αυτά τα ιδιότυπα άλγη, η γυναίκα μέσα από μιά εσώτατη αυτογνωσία καταργεί όλα της τα στερεότυπα[...] παρατηρεί με τρόπο διαφορετικό, όχι τόσο μέσα από τη βιολογική διαφορά, όσο μέσα από τους κοινωνικούς περιορισμούς της φυλετικής του υποταγής" (1990:47). Thus, the contemporary Greek female writing subject, as it appears in the discussion, puts aside the stereotypical definition of women's literature as exemplified by Kourtovik's criticisms of limited scope, narrow thematics and gender-specific appeal, in order to accept the distinction of women's literature as different from literature written by men, but in no case as restrictive as male criticism considers it to be. As K. Anghelaki-Rooke argues, those women writers who accept the term women's literature as relevant to their work, "δεν τον βλέπουν σα μια μονολιθική κατάταξη, όπου πρέπει, σώνει και καλά, να ενταχθούνε αυτές και τα γραφτά τους. Αντίθετα, το γένος είναι ένα πολυσύστημα, μιά πλειονότητα από ιδέες και τρόπους ύπαρξης, που, όλα μαζί, αποτελούν το θηλυκό"(1990:26). In other

words, the female writing subject to be read in texts written by contemporary Greek women writers is a subject in process; the process being defined by the feminist struggles of the seventies in the rest of Europe and America which argued that the personal is political, and by the struggles of the revival of the feminist movement in Greece during 1980's which culminated in the slogan "Δεν είμαι του αντρός μου, δεν είμαι του πατρός μου, θέλω νάμαι ο εαυτός μου".

The emphasis on the need to define the female identity, and especially the identity of the female as a gendered writing subject, which emerges as the desideratum of the "dialogue" constructed in the previous pages, requires an exploration of the relationship between the production of texts and female creativity.

In 1982, at the time when the debate about women's literature was just emerging, Rea Galanaki, in an article titled 'Η Γυναικεία Γραφή και η Καταραμένη Πανδώρα', described the woman who writes as follows:

ο άνθρωπος που γράφει, όταν είναι γυναίκα, κουβαλά μια πελώρια τσάντα και την ανοίγει. Εξάλλου και η μυθική Πανδώρα άνοιξε κάποτε την τσάντα της, όπου εφύλασσε το πορτοφόλι, το ημερολόγιο, τις αποδείξεις, το καρνέ, τα κλειδιά, γυαλιά του ήλιου, την ταυτότητά της. Ο άνθρωπος λοιπόν που γράφει όταν είναι γυναίκα, ανοίγει την τσάντα της έτσι όπως γράφει ένα βιβλίο[...] όλα θα υπάρξουν στις μελλοντικές σελίδες[...] Ο άνθρωπος που γράφει όταν είναι γυναίκα, ανοίγει το φορτίο της με τα μικρά και άχρηστα για τους άλλους καθημερινά της αντικείμενα, που οριοθετούν το δικό της σύστημα ζωής και τα φωτίζει μ' άλλον τρόπο. Που

σημαίνει, από τη μια μεριά ότι τους σβήνει την ασημαντότητα που γενικά θεωρούνται ότι έχουν, και από την άλλη ότι τους ανάβει το εννοιολογικό και ψυχολογικό φορτίο, που αυτή νομίζει ότι έχουν. Το εννοιολογικό και ψυχολογικό φορτίο που έχει ο δικός της κόσμος, είναι αυτή η ίδια.[...] ένα είναι το πιο σημαντικό, από μια θάλασσα υποθέσεων: ότι ή γυναίκα συγγραφέας μπορεί αυτή η ίδια, να παράγει μια διαφορετική μορφή του μύθου της.(364,367)

Galanaki makes a crucial connection between women's creativity and the female identity, when she says that the different version of the myth of 'woman' will come through a woman's text about her own experience which "είναι αυτή η ίδια". Since a woman's experience is of the myth constructed by masculine practices, which have the power to define both themselves and the feminine, the specification of the woman who writes as a subcategory of the general "άνθρωπος που γράφει" demands further attention. The masculine article that precedes "ο άνθρωπος" excludes and marginalizes the female from its universal implications of creativity, in the same way that the general term literature does for women's writing. What is needed for the production of a different version of the myth of woman through women's writing is an engendering of the subject who writes, a change in the defining article of the creator, as Zoe Karelli has argued in her poem 'Η Άνθρωπος':

[...] για να γνωρίσω τον κόσμο δι' εμού,
για να πω το λόγο δικό μου,
εγώ που ως τώρα υπήρξα
για να θαυμάζω, να σέβομαι και ν' αγαπώ,
εγώ πια δεν του ανήκω
και πρέπει μονάχη να είμαι,
εγώ, η άνθρωπος. (1973:124)

The concept of identity implies both sameness and distinctiveness and is always construed in relation to the universal notion of the creative individual, the paradigm for which has been male from the time God entered texts onwards. Since individuals are conditioned to experience the world in a gender-specific way, the inscription of that experience in texts will also be gender-specific. As women's positioning in relation to the production of discourse is that of an object, so much so that it is difficult to perceive of women other than as the passive receptacles of culture, one can say that the gender difference in experience is a difference in language, taking into account Teresa de Lauretis' definition of experience as a "personal subjective engagement in the practices, discourses and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, and affect) to the events of the world"(1984:159).

In terms of creativity, the creating subject throughout mythology and history, and lately throughout most critical theory, has largely been endowed with masculine characteristics, whereas the creation, the object, has been endowed with feminine ones. From Ovid's story of the male sculptor Pygmalion who in the *Metamorphoses* "carved the snow-white ivory/with marvellous triumphant artistry/and gave it perfect shape, more beautiful/ than ever woman born"(X, 248-251)¹², to Artemidorus who wrote that if one sees a writing

¹²In this chapter quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in English come from

tablet in his sleep "γυναῖκα σημαίνει διὰ τὸ τύπους παντοδαπούς γραμμάτων ἐπιδέχασθαι"(1963:2.45), to Claude Lévi-Strauss' observation that women are "circulated between clans, lineages, or families, in place of the words of the group, which are circulated between individuals"(1968:61), to J. Derrida's identification of the pen with the penis and the page with the hymen in his exposition of the literary process, which the translator Gayatri Spivak amplifies by saying that "the hymen is the always folded[...]space in which the pen writes its dissemination"(1976:lxvi), what remains constant is that the female must be identified by language used by men. The appropriation and the representation of the female 'read' or 'written' into textuality, which, as Susan Gubar has argued, often results in the case that "when the metaphors of literary creativity are filtered through a sexual lens, female sexuality is often identified with textuality"(1981:245), paves the way for the definition of the myth of 'woman' as follows: the passive receptacle of culture, where the writing subject is always male and excludes her from the creation of culture, but requires her as an artifact within culture. In that sense, since the created female is represented as having no name, no voice of her own and no identity other than the one created for her by the male, the woman who writes is, by definition, engaging in a subversive act.

A. D. Melville's 1987 translation, whereas quotations in Latin come from the Loeb edition of 1916. In both cases the Latin text's line numbers are used.

In order to address the implications that arise from engendering the writing subject, and explore the relationship between the production of texts and female creativity, I will turn to what Nancy Miller has called the 'language of textiles', which, in terms of the stereotypical image of woman as text and artifact, "tends to engender in the dominant discursive strategies of much contemporary literary criticism a metaphors of femininity deeply marked by Freud's account of women and weaving"(1986:271). Freud, in the essay on "Femininity", argues that the unique contribution of women to civilization is weaving, invented as a symbolic repetition of nature's concealing act by which pubic hair comes to hide what is said to be missing, that is their "genital deficiency"(1965:132). Taking into account Freud's association between women and weaving, Barthes' assertion that "the text means tissue" (1974:64), K. Anghelaki-Rooke's description of the female identity that "περνάει σα νήμα"(1990:33) through women's texts, and P. Pamboudi's view that the creative process is as personal and solitary as weaving because it "απαιτεί να χειρίζεσαι τον λόγο σαν μεταξωτές κλωστές"(1990:54), I will examine how the 'language of textiles' can affect the choice of metaphors that denote female creativity.

When in 1896 Emmanuel Roidis was arguing that women's writing should only be "περί εργοχείρων και μαγειρικής"(1978:124) he required the female artifact to fulfil a peripheral desire for decorative and culinary pleasure. Thus, the perception of a text

written by a woman as an 'εργόχειρο', on the one hand, effaces the implications of 'woman' as a culture-creating subject, while on the other hand, and through what Spivak(1983) has called a "double displacement", it simultaneously positions her work in a social discourse of uniformity under the collective noun 'women'. The metonymic casting of the text as texture has important connotations for the myth of 'woman' if one looks closely at the case of the mythological figure of Arachne, because as Miller has shown, her case enables "a critical positioning which reads *against* the weave of indifferentiation to discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity"(1988:80).

Ovid writes in the *Metamorphoses* that Arachne who "had no distinction in her place of birth"(VI,7) won her fame through her "wondrous work"(VI,14) of weaving and embroidering the wool that her father dyed by profession. Refuting the assumptions that her art is great because Athena herself had taught her, Arachne invites the goddess into a weaving contest. Athena arrives disguised as an old woman to warn Arachne against defying the order of the gods, saying that "Among the world of men/Seek for your wool-craft all the fame you will/But yield the goddess place"(VI,30-33), but as the girl defiantly insists on her superior talent, Athena reveals herself and the challenge begins.

Both women weave an ancient tale on the loom: Athena depicts the twelve gods in all their glory, and herself in fearsome and victorious splendour (helmet and sharp-tipped spear included). On the four corners of her canvas, however, she

weaves scenes of mortals who have challenged the gods and failed to win(Rhodope and Hemon, Pygmy, Antigone, Cinyras), while she frames the whole picture in a border of an olive branch, "her own fair tree"(VI,102). Arachne, on the other hand, chooses to weave stories of "caelestia crimina"(VI,131), that is tales of women (Europa, Leda, Antiope etc.) who have been raped or abducted on a whim of divine desire. She encloses the composition in a narrow border of "flowers and clinging ivy intertwined"(VI,128).¹³

Unable to find fault with the technical aspect of Arachne's art, Athena decides to punish her instead for the signifieds of her product. She tears the woven cloth to pieces and hits the girl on the head with the shuttle several times. When, in desperation, Arachne tries to kill herself by tying a noose around her head, the goddess pities her and transforms her into a spider, so that she will eternally hang from her own thread to "pursu[e] her former skill [and] weav[e] her web"(VI:145) with her bodily secretions.

As Nancy Miller argues, Ovid's tale presents "the stories of sexual difference as a matter of interpretation, Arachne is punished for her point of view. For this, she is restricted to spinning outside representation, to a reproduction that turns back on itself. Cut off from the work of art, she spins like a

¹³It is interesting to note that the participle with which Ovid describes the flowers intertwined with ivy in the original Latin is "*intertextos*"(VI,128).

woman"(1988:82). However, Ovid's tale includes a representation of another woman, namely Athena, who punishes Arachne's signing her distinctive, gendered identity in a hubristic text/tapestry which disrupts the divine hierarchy. Having sprung from Zeus' head, Athena is therefore identified with the phallic authority of the Olympian gods, and represents the Law-giving daughter that serves the existing cultural order. In other words, she implements the Chinese proverb "άμα η όρνιθα αρχίση να λαλεί ως πετεινός, σφάξε την αμέσως" which Roidis employed in his advice to the 'γράφουσαι Ελληνίδες' of 1896 (1978:123). Returning to the point made earlier, about the double displacement of female creativity, whereas Arachne at her loom represents a 'woman' signing her protest, when transformed into a spider that naturally produces meaningless and endless work, she loses her identity in the indifferenciating cultural collectivity of the myth of 'women' and their safe, domestic, femininely appropriate craft of weaving, of which the goddess Athena is the supreme master and guardian.

A tale that is surprisingly absent from Arachne's tapestry is the story of Philomela, another female mythological figure that turned the feminine, domestic act of weaving into a means of resistance. Forced into a life without speech when Tereus, her sister's husband, raped her and cut out her tongue, she found an alternative voice to make the violation public by weaving it in a tapestry. This tale is the myth that underlies F. Tamvakakis'

novel *Τα Τοπία της Φιλομήλας*(1988)¹⁴ in which Fivos, the narrator, tells the story of a mute girl, Philomela, who comes to live in his house when her parents die in a car accident. She is an exceptionally talented pianist and achieves international fame through his father's musical tutelage. The narrative presents Philomela willingly submitting to, and even 'provoking', three brutal rapes by several different men, because as she reveals to Fivos in a letter towards the end of the text, "είναι ο μόνος τρόπος"(217).

In Tamvakakis' text, the myth of Philomela's rape operates as ritual which, in a fiction that describes wise men as having been chosen by a "προκατειλημμένο σπέρμα"(220), reaffirms the notion of myth as offering "total and adequate explanations of things as they are and were; it is a sequence of radically unchangeable gestures"(Kermode 1967:39). Thus, the myth of the raped and mute woman, which Arachne and the mythical Philomela protested against through their texts/tapestries, is reconstructed in Tamvakakis narrative as the fictional Philomela creates her stereotypical representation by reversing the act of her mythological resistance into an act of willing submission and acceptance. Taking into account the mythical stories of Arachne and Philomela, the fictional treatment of Philomela in Tamvakakis' novel, and Kermode's assertion that "myths are the agents of stability, fictions are the agents of change"(1967:39),

¹⁴Tamvakakis' *Τα Τοπία της Φιλομήλας* has surprisingly been described by some critics as a feminist novel.

in order to show how a feminist reading is inevitably a reading of culture, and how texts can subvert or propagate stereotypical representations of women and creativity, I will briefly refer to two texts written by women, that engage themselves and the reader in engendering the writing subject in very different ways: Evgenia Fakinou's remarkably popular novel *To Eβδομο Ρούχο* (1983)¹⁵ and Isak Dinesen's short story 'The Blank Page' (1975).¹⁶ Both texts are set in a primarily female context, a house for Fakinou's novel and a convent for Dinesen's; both stories involve women as traditional tellers of tales and, in addition, they both make symbolic use of women's blood on a piece of cloth which can be construed as the writing woman's signature.

Dinesen's story is told by an old woman, who learned the art of storytelling from her grandmother, and who, in turn, had learned it from her own grandmother. It centres on a monastery of Carmelite nuns who grow flax to manufacture the finest linen in Portugal. This linen is used for the bridal sheets of all neighbouring royal houses. The sheets are hung on the palace balcony after the wedding night as the Chamberlain declares "*Virginem eam tenemus* -we declare her to have been a virgin"(102-103). The bloodied sheet is later returned to the convent, is mounted, framed and displayed in a long corridor with

¹⁵ *To Eβδομο Ρούχο* is currently in its 14th edition.

¹⁶ Isak D Dinesen is the pseudonym of Karen Blixen, and 'The Blank Page' is part of a collection of twelve short stories called *Last Tales* published in 1957 as the last pieces she wrote before her death in 1962.

a plate attached to identify the name of the princess. Tradition has it that princesses and royal servants make a pilgrimage to see the framed sheets that bear the faded markings of the wedding night for "each separate canvas with its coroneted name-plate has a story to tell, and each has been set up in loyalty to the story"(104). However, pilgrims are mainly fascinated by the story implied by one framed canvas which is unstained, has a nameless plate attached, is described as 'a blank page'(104) and gives the story its title.

In *To Eβδομο Πούχο* the story is told by Mana (the grandmother), Eleni (the daughter), both living in the village suggestively called Rizes, and Roula (the granddaughter) who lives in Athens, representing three generations of women in the same family that meet on the occasion of the dying Fotos (their son, brother and uncle respectively). They perform a funeral ritual involving seven mounted 'flamboura' which bear the clothing of the first-born son of a first-born son going back seven generations, and which is indispensable to the tradition of the family. When the seventh garment, from which the novel takes its title, is mysteriously lost, Mana intervenes, stabs herself in the chest and produces her bloodied vest to be used in the place of the missing one so that the ritual can be properly performed.

Both the framed bridal sheets, as well as the mounted 'flamboura', each tell the same story of men's success, but the connection each text makes between sexuality and textuality,

between the creative subject and the created text is treated very differently in terms of the replacement of the seventh garment and the unstained frame.

Although the alternating interior monologues in *To Εβδομο Ρούχο* all tell the private stories of women's historical and physical rape, the ritual that gives the novel the opportunity for the specific title, tells the public history of the masculinity and heroism of seven first-born sons of a first-born son, named either Thodoros or Yiannis, that reaches back almost one hundred and fifty years. The repetition of the same two proper names, passed from father to son, suggests the centrality of the male blood line and the importance of the symbolism of blood in the narrative, especially if one takes into account the fact that the whole narrative is woven around a single event: Fotos, the offspring of Demos' rape of Mana, intervenes and kills his father trying to save his sister Arhondoula from forcibly losing her virginity.¹⁷

As most of the women's stories are of physical and historical rape, they are characterised in the narrative by passivity and lack of resistance. What is important is that the values of the male order are upheld and women pass their culturally assigned role and ritual activities from one generation to the next. The uprooted Babo (Demos' blind grandmother) passes

¹⁷Actually, the narrative leaves open the possibility that Fotos' intervention might have come after the violation had taken place.

on to the uprooted and raped Mana the cultivation of her garden, explains the process of obtaining the tree's oracles and assigns to her the seven 'flamboura', which when Mana gets old and blind she passes on to her daughter Eleni, the twin sister of Fotos. It is important to note that the passing on of the ritual to Mana derives from the necessity that tradition, that is male culture, must be perpetuated even through a woman who does not legitimately belong to the same family. Similarly, when Arhontoula is forced to uproot herself to Athens, and has a daughter she names Roula, (short for Demetra, her mother's name), she passes on her own debt to Fotos, making Roula solemnly swear to attend his funeral at all costs.

Women's fate, which in the novel revolves around inescapable violation, uprooting, and conforming to the demands of the male, is reenacted through Roula's obligation to fulfil her mother's wish. The text's description of Roula's journey to Rizes not only reproduces Mana's own journey sixty years earlier in remarkable detail¹⁸, but it also has her assuming her mother's

¹⁸ Both women's journeys are described as quests generated by an earlier promise: Mana to find Persephone and Roula to attend Fotos' funeral. Both quests are prophetically directed towards fulfilment by a masculine vision: Mana finds her way to Rizes through an apparition of Andronikos' head, and Roula dreams of a man's head on a marble column. Furthermore, both women approach the village in an identical way: In 1923, Mana finds herself in a "τρέστρατο", it is evening, a cart driver offers her a ride and an umbrella to shelter herself from the rain, the route followed is through a forest full of springs and the first thing she sees of Rizes is

role, urged on by Mana, to reassure the dying Fotos that his masculine intervention was successful in safeguarding Archondoula's virginity in order to provide a blood-stained bridal sheet.

Virginal blood also marks the fate of the other child of the original rape, Eleni, who at the time of her first menstruation was spoken to by the tree and was forced into the cultural role of a chaste priestess. It is her virginity that allowed the ritual of the 'flamboura' to reach its apogee, as during Eleni's guardianship the seven first-born sons of a first-born son tell their stories of heroism through her mouth, in their own voices.

Although the younger generation of women represented by Roula who prepares to leave Rizes "καταφλιασμένη" and "φρικαρισμένη" and Ritsa (also short for Demetra) who has declined Eleni's offer to teach her the secrets of the tree and will probably follow her cousin, appear to dismiss the traditional restrictions on women, they are not given an authoritative voice in the narrative. Just as in the case of Archontoula, what the two young women will carry on their escape to Athens is the story of yet another violation of

the church clock although she cannot read the time; In 1983, Roula is left by a taxi driver in the middle of a crossroads, it is evening, she is offered a ride by a tractor driver with whom she shares an umbrella, she passes through a forest full of 'waters' and the first thing she sees of Rizes is the church clock stuck at five to twelve.

a woman's body. This is the story that Mana puts her signature to, by enacting her sacrificial suicide to prevent the disruption of the patriarchal order. Mana acts as authoritatively as Athena in Arachne's story, to preserve the cultural demands made in Fakinou's novel by the oak tree and its phallic enclosure of the narrative.¹⁹ She thus sustains the patriarchal construction of the myth of woman, which needs to be fed on the female blood of rape, childbirth and virginity, by choosing to put her signature to a tale that tells of the importance of continuing to tell his story, even if it costs her life. It is the story of the universal, that is the male, creative paradigm that totally bypasses gender implications, but requires a woman's body as metaphorical proof of the male's ability to create, and which is suggested by the description of Mana's body revealed after the suicide. The narrative uses the metaphor of Mana's body to reaffirm the connection between authorship and masculinity, that is between the female body as the page on which the male pen inscribes its marks: Andronikos, the husband, had painted pictures all over her body, but had especially chosen to decorate her chest with the strongly phallic symbolism of two reclining cypresses.²⁰ It is from the point of convergence of these two trees that the blood

¹⁹ J. G. Frazer mentions that the worship of the oracular oak tree was associated Zeus as a "fitting home for the god whose voice was heard alike in the rustling of the oak leaves and in the crash of thunder"(1987:159).

²⁰For the symbolism of the cypress tree as sacred, healing and divine see Frazer 'The worship of trees' (1987:109-120).

that stains the substitute for the missing seventh garment springs forth.

The tissue/text on which the blood of Mana puts her signature is an analogue of the Freudian metaphor which has women reenacting the act of nature to disguise their missing phallus. It is nature that underwrites Mana's signature of the tale, in the image of the phallic old oak tree whose speeches begin and end the narrative, enclosing it in connotations of an eternal unchangeable and indestructible essence. The words that the tree whispers to women are those that define the myth of 'woman' and her role as guardian of tradition; thus, when the tree, certain that women will always come asking for its advice, proclaims that it loves the colour of nature, the connotation is of the colour of women's menstrual, childbearing or virginal blood, on which the authenticity of the creating and conquering powers of the phallus depend for their perpetuation.

In opposition to Mana's final penetration by the knife that signifies the female flesh turned into male word, the connection between the female body and male authority, between the page and the pen, is subverted in 'The Blank Page' through the contrast of the blood-stained bridal sheets of control and the blank sheet associated with the blank page. Although the stained sheets, just like Mana's bloodied vest, serve as testaments of the contracts of the patriarchal order, the blank sheet made of the same virginal snow-white canvas and mounted in a conventional frame, presents a story of defiance and resistance. Moreover,

since this sheet is unnamed, there can never be a limit to the story it tells, and it challenges the constructions both of authorship and patriarchal authority. The subversion does not so much depend on the nuns who are still depicted as the custodians of tradition, but on the old female storyteller whose voice finally signs the story of the blank page and brings it to the attention of an audience of ladies and gentlemen. As it falls upon storytellers to confirm or undermine patriarchal stereotypes that define the myth of woman, in Dinesen's story, the female blood that has refused to stain the bridal sheet of tradition becomes the pivotal construction for the female writer to challenge the myth of 'woman' by refusing to be written on.

The storytelling women in both narratives are put in a position of control over the reporting of a disturbance to the patriarchal order. However, despite sharing similar thematic concerns with the 'Blank Page', the non-subversiveness of *To Εβδομο Ρούχο* lies in its specific narrative choice concerning the shedding of female blood. Although in both cases what is missing is a blood-stained piece of cloth, female blood is shed in *To Εβδομο Ρούχο* to restore taxis, uphold patriarchal values and prevent the reporting of the absence of a token of masculinity; in contrast, the denial to shed female blood as commanded by father and husband to uphold and certify the continuity of male dominance, is subverted by being publicly reported in 'The Blank Page'.

Furthermore, the upholding of traditional values in *To Εβδομο*

Πούχο is also manifested on another level where the narrative choices do not allow the act of reading to enable another poetics, a poetics attached to the gendered bodies of women who write their own version of the myth of 'woman' like Arachne. In contrast, the subversive narrative choice in 'The Blank Page' refuses to fulfil the return of the male narcissistic desire, and the patriarchal culture that has created the myth of 'woman' as artifact, as an object with no voice and no identity of her own. The resistance to penetration by the male, of which the white bridal sheet tells the story, implies woman as a gendered writing subject, since the traditional weaver of tissue/text subversively becomes the inscriber of a general script that reports and uncovers a celebration of the fact that the phallus is missing, or that has not been permitted to be there.

In terms of women storytellers who have temporarily signed their names on the nameless plate of the blank page, and have inscribed on its patriarchal tissue their own scripts in black ink, this thesis hopes to set up a dialogue between feminist critical theory and narrative practice, in order to explore the subversive as it can be read in contemporary Greek women's fiction. The four novels and one short story that I have selected to discuss in detail are: Zyranna Zateli's *'Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά'* (1984), Margarita Karapanou's *Ο Υπνοβάτης* (1985), Rea Galanaki's *Ο Βλος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* (1989), Iro Stavraki's *Αλμα* (1989) and Neni Efthymiadi's *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* (1988). I would not like to suggest that the subversive can only be read in those five texts, or only in texts written by women, or even only in texts that

have been written recently. In fact, the subversive can be read in such fictions of earlier periods, among others for example in *Τα Ψάθινα Καπέλλα* written by M. Lymberaki (1989) or *Τα Πέτρινα Λιοντάρια* written by I. Iatridi (1984), as well as in fictions that are written by contemporary women writers but are not discussed in this thesis; for example, *Ανδρογύς* written by A. Deligiorgi (1980), *Τα Φωνήεντα της σιωπής*, a collection of short stories written by A. Kefala (1990), and *Μεξικό* written by E. Sotiropoulou (1988) to name but three. The subversive can also be read in texts written by men²¹ because, sifted through feminist critical theory, its primary focus is not the undermining of the biologically given difference between male and female, but the exploration and unveiling of the masculine or feminine subject as constituted by the patriarchal culture in whose pre-existing signifying chain the subject must place herself or himself. Thus, this thesis considers as subversive those texts, which, irrespective of the sex of the writer, present gender-conscious narratives where gender is a way of doing rather than a way of being.

The assertion that what is important is not the sex of a writer but its socially constructed gender, along with the use a female or male writer makes of it, is sustained by the fact that gendered identities can only take their meaning from their position and relation to other classifications and therefore they should be thought of as 'temporary' or 'strategic' (Riley

²¹For example, Yioryis Yiatromanolakis' *Ιστορία* (1982).

1987:136). Moreover, the placement of gendered identities in this context implicates the notion of subjectivity also as a doing rather than a being and thus, as Judith Butler has shown, if one thinks of gender not as an essential substance but as a performance, one is able to expose the fact that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 1990:25).

The five texts to be discussed through close textual analysis were selected for offering a diversity, both in terms of subject matter as well as in terms of narrative practice, which is necessary in order for the subversive not to be seen as an alternative authoritative and canonical value. The concentration on reading the subversive does not mean to imply that other forms of critical approach to women's literature, or women's images in literature, are less productive. I would like to stress the importance of critical approaches that attempt to unveil and bring into focus the work of women writers from the past, or those that attempt to analyse women's representations in works by male authors so as to expose how gender stereotypes are propagated; or of those approaches that can be called 'descriptive' of the current position of women in contemporary society, which expose the way in which women are, for instance, oppressed as mothers, mistresses, sex objects, or underpaid workers; or even of the usefulness of the 'prescriptive' approaches of "gynesis", that celebrate the superiority of the feminine, and achieve a kind of reversal which is politically

necessary, even if their advocacy of a "vrai-elle"²², is situated in a rather utopian space that lies beyond the masculine order of logic and mastery.

However, the favouring of the subversive that is proposed in this thesis depends on its ability to expose values, which are considered to be authentic and natural, as societal constructs. In so doing, it does not make claims of access to any 'truth' and does not propose new gender 'realities' but in the end proclaims its own fictionality as a means to break down the 'either - or' oppositions of the order of exclusiveness that relegates women's literature as the other of literature written by men. In that sense, the subversive, as read in contemporary Greek women's fiction, does not claim a utopian space outside patriarchy from which it speaks itself, but disrupts the patriarchal codes of production of meaning from the margins -where women are

²² The concept of "vrai-elle" represents a kind of "she-truth" and derives from Julia Kristeva's notion of the "vréel"(1986:214-237) which is a combination of the *le vrai* [the real] and *le réel* [the real]. As the vréel is a kind of truth-in-experience that can never been seen, or present itself directly, but rather something that is always hidden, that captures and withdraws at the same time, it becomes a non-truth, or an always partial truth of Truth. In so far as the "true-real" is something that escapes discourse but is nevertheless discursively present, it becomes an analogy for woman, or better analogous to a "she-truth". When the "she truth" is put into discourse it becomes part of the process of producing what French feminist critics call *écriture féminine* and Alice Jardine among American feminist critics calls "gynesis"(1982).

situated- but within the dominant culture.

With regard to dealing with contemporary fiction, this thesis recognises that its arguments form a provisional construction which is subject to revision in the context of the constantly shifting social and discursive positions that men and women occupy as well as in terms of the constantly shifting relations between margins and centres. Moreover, the decision to deal with the contemporary forms a doubly binding context: on a theoretical level the contemporariness of the fictions discussed unavoidably renders problematic the temptation to detect textual or contextual weaknesses, as one may be inclined to do in texts of earlier periods, and at the same time it takes away from the readings proposed in this thesis any possibility of claiming a final knowledge. On a more 'practical' level the contemporariness of the fictions discussed raises specific methodological issues. As the texts are so recent, little or no critical discourse has grown around them. Apart from the articles and interviews mentioned in this chapter, other responses to contemporary fiction can only be found in newspaper book-reviews (significantly known in Greece as "βιβλιοκρισίες") whose preoccupation with telling "good" from "bad" books is not particularly related to the aim of this thesis. However, the main implication that dealing with the contemporary entails, is that this thesis had inevitably to comply with the process of unfolding of the contemporary since texts that were published after I had begun my research had to be included. Other texts, in turn, had to be excluded simply because by the time they

appeared my selection was finalised.

The texts that will be discussed later take up multiple and contradictory positions in relation to different hegemonic discursive systems, specifically in relation to sexuality, origins, history, language and subjectivity. In so doing, they test the limits of engendering the female writing subject, present feminine identity as a construction in process, and by locating the subject of difference in writing and language, produce a literature of subversion which of necessity demands to be read in a broader context, against what we have learned to see as the monuments of the dominant culture.

CHAPTER 1

"ΠΕΡΣΙΝΗ ΑΡΡΑΒΩΝΙΑΣΤΙΚΙΑ" : EXPLORING FEMALE SEXUALITY

As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attention. No nervous or feeble young man need therefore be deterred from marriage by an exaggerated notion of the duties required from him.

The Function and Disorders of the Re-productive Organs
Dr William Acton (1857)

Appeals to 'Nature' have long been one of the most powerful weapons against change. The empirically observable fact that male and female bodies are different, has been used to cement the binarism of a string of oppositions which appear to correspond to a 'natural' state of being where reason naturally reigns, and where men are men and women are women.

As society invested this anatomical difference with meanings, the difference between man and woman became gendered, that is, it acquired socially produced feminine and masculine characteristics. As a result, the stereotypes connoted and brought forth as 'naturally' male or female, offer not descriptive, but gender-prescriptive traits which confirm the

assumptions made in society about masculine and feminine behaviour.

Categorization by gender has been instrumental in the formulation and dissemination as well as in the subversion of received notions of sexual difference. Thus, biological difference, articulated in literary texts, often becomes the locus for voicing gender-specific concerns centred around the problem of female and male identity. However, gender difference can also be perceived to be the locus of an articulation of genre differences as well.

In this respect there is a long tradition that identifies the female anatomy with a degrading linguistic destiny. This tradition is driven by the desire to bestow feminine virtues on all female bodies, physical or textual. The qualities of the feminine, seen as relevant to the work of female writers, sketch conceptions of genre difference. The position of women's writing in relation to men's becomes, therefore, analogous, for example, to the position and the value of figurative language as opposed to a utilitarian one. As the ability of language to instruct (a masculine attribute) is privileged over its capacity to entertain (a feminine characteristic), texts are impregnated with gendered qualities, and acquire, by association, genre implications as well. This gender-related differentiation of a text's ability to represent truth, knowledge, and clarity as opposed to giving pleasure, thereby becomes a genre-specific trait. It is therefore understandable why as far back as 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft,

one of the most influential feminist thinkers, implored women to discard feminine ways of writing after citing Rousseau's assertion that "a man speaks of what he knows, a woman of what pleases her; the one requires knowledge, the other taste; the principal object of a man's discourse should be what is useful, that of a woman what is agreeable"(1975:183).

This advice generates questions which are still pertinent to discussions of women's writing, as can be seen in a new tradition that has developed in recent years. In this tradition the desire to assert difference based on 'nature' and specifically in terms of what Wollstonecraft advised against, has been appropriated in feminist writing and critical practice. Using a reversal of the balance of values in binary oppositions, this branch of feminist criticism focuses on exalting the value of feminine characteristics in order to reclaim and reaffirm the specificity of the female sex by establishing a unitary identity for 'woman' or 'woman's writing'.

However, when textuality is linked to sexuality on the basis of a belief in an essential difference between the sexes, its masculine or feminine oriented manifestations still depend on the conflict between the competing parts of oppositional couples that are derived from a primordial rational language that corresponds to a 'natural' state of being. This way, the attribution of gender difference to Nature, and especially the perception of biological difference as an 'essential' reality, has resulted in the 'naturalization' of the arguments in the

continuing debate of sexual difference being the definitive factor behind a fundamental difference in sexual identity.

For an example of the 'naturalization' of the masculine and the feminine into the male and the female, one can look at nature programmes on television which are usually obsessed with mating and reproduction, setting out a whole series of preconceptions about masculine and feminine human behaviour, to explain animal sexual behaviour. As Rosalind Coward has argued (1984:209-215), in those nature programmes about animal sexuality, all sorts of human and social attributes are projected on to the behaviour of animals, preconceptions about male aggression, bachelorhood, dominance, property, women's nesting instincts, offering constant comment on human society and reaffirming its assumptions about gender-related sexuality, always under the pretence of scientific observation, and always reminding one that what one is watching for the first time, as captured by the camera of a dedicated scientist-cum-cinematographer, is nature caught in the act.

If by 'natural' one is to understand the way that non-human animals behave, then human sexual behaviour, even the privileged monogamous, heterosexual and preferably married variety, has long ceased to be natural, since for humans sex has never been a simple baby-making mechanism, but a source of sensual pleasure as well. However, leaving all pleasures aside for the moment, the fact remains that sexual difference is of necessity invested with meanings which result in the formation and subsequent

acquisition of gendered identities for both men and women. Since specific masculine and feminine qualities in gendered sexuality set out the roles of the male and the female in sexual behaviour, as well as beyond it, it becomes obvious that sexuality is an important site for the analysis of power.

The focal point in the exercise of power of the dominant ideology of modern Western society, an ideology Foucault has called "the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure"(1978:11), has become the control of subjects through their bodies. Society has fictionalized its relationship to sex, has organized itself on the basis of it and has devised gendered sexualities for men and women, calling them 'natural'. Therefore, the notion of 'sex' has made it possible "to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified"(Foucault 1978:154). All manifestations of sex are controlled by the creation of stereotypical expectations of models for masculine and feminine sexuality in and out of bedrooms or legally binding arrangements, as well as in and out of relationships that do, or do not, aim at the procreation of mankind or simply at achieving pleasure. It follows, therefore, that although the established 'natural' norm for masculine sexuality is associated with lust, promiscuity, uncontrollable and aggressive passion, in the case of the feminine sexuality it is doubly defining: it ranges between the

extremes of non-existence as defined by the demands for motherhood, nurture and controlled monogamy on the one hand, to the dangerous state of the metaphorically diseased whore on the other. However, since the strategies of control and power are primarily patriarchal, this doubly binding definition of female sexuality which disseminates representations of women either as asexual and chaste mothers, or as the overtly sexual property of men, serves the strategy of the dominant ideology, ensuring at the same time both "the sanctity and inheritance of their families and their extra-familial sexual pleasure." (Barrett 1980:45). One, therefore, cannot talk about a 'natural' female sexuality based on an anatomical distinction, but only of a socially constructed feminine one which is the effect of an endless array of hierarchical binary distinctions, making equal claims to the 'naturalness' of their definition by referring it back to the unavoidable fact of the anatomical difference between men and women.

On the other hand, the anatomical difference of the male and female bodies has been perceived by many feminists as an opportunity to stress, once more, the patriarchal oppression of women. The well-known slogan of the feminist movement that women's bodies belong to them only, which relies on the concept that a natural but repressed and inherently subversive female sexuality exists, stemming as it does from the particularities of the female body, runs through feminist literature both in the U.S.A and Europe. No matter how useful claims about the existence of an essentially female sexuality can be at specific

historical times, the danger still remains the same if one maintains that femininity is a natural attribute of women and not a socially constructed one. As Angela Carter wittily puts it "our flesh arrives to us out of history, like everything else does. We may believe we fuck stripped of social artifice; in bed, we can even feel we touch the bedrock of human nature itself. But we are deceived. Flesh is not an irreducible human universal"(Carter 1979:9).

This chapter will provide a critique of the gender and genre implications that result from linking textuality to sexuality. In particular, drawing from feminist critical theories, the discussion will focus on the way the short story 'Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά'¹ written by Zyranna Zateli (1984) subverts the

¹Zyranna Zateli was born in 1951; "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" is the first of nine short stories in a collection with the same title which is currently in its 5th edition. All the short stories are narrated in the first person and form part of the reminiscences of a woman about various periods of her past life. In the first six short stories, the narrative revolves around ideas of childhood, child abuse, sex, pleasure, fear and death and many references are made to characters that appear in "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά". However, in the sixth story called "Ζίνα" a reference is made to the state of the narrator at the time, namely "ήμουν μιά περσινή πιά αρραβωνιαστικιά, χωρίς Μάρκο"(102) and after that the narration in the remaining three short stories switches mainly to events in Germany without any further reference to characters or situations narrated in the first six stories, thus giving a clue to the importance of the first short story which lends its title to the whole

"naturalization" of patriarchally constructed sexual identities and romantic narratives that propagate stereotypical representations of masculine and feminine sexuality through their implicitly prescriptive and instructive discourse.

The subversion of the claim that there is a naturally definable female and consequently male sexuality which stems directly from biological sex, is achieved by parodying it through a narrative which presents two cats, Markos and Myrsa, in such a way that the reader is obliged to think of their behaviour in human terms, as well as through their relation to the narrative, which is delivered from the point of view of a narrator who is doubly present: on the one hand, as the "narrating I" who tells a story of her childhood, and on the other hand, as the "experiencing I" who in the story may be assumed to be no older than ten years of age.

The story is of the love between a girl "engaged" to Markos and about his mother Myrsa. In the end, Markos dies under the wheels of a truck on a cold January morning, leaving his sexually immature fiancée inconsolable. The last line of the text categorically and explicitly informs the reader that the "characters" Markos and Myrsa are cats rather than humans, while ironically it does not put an end to the reader's response to

collection. Zateli has also published another collection of twenty-one short stories under the title *Στην ερημιά με χάρη* (1986).

them in human terms. In addition, the reader's accumulated expectations of a human Markos and a human Myrsa are so tightly and consistently developed by the narrative that they cannot even be shaken by the comments of the adult-narrator who, shortly after narrating Markos' tragic death, declares in a rather detached way that "άλλωστε πέρασαν χρόνια από τότε και ο Μάρκος είναι μια λύπη που την αντέχω πλέον, ούτε λόγος[...] πολύ περισσότερο δε που έκτοτε μου συνέβησαν σαφώς χειρότερα κι απείρως οδυνηρότερα συμβάντα με άλλους κι αλλοιώτικους, ας πούμε αρραβωνιαστικούς"(20-21).

As "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" parodies the notions of a natural female or male sexuality, by being a love story it also comes into intertextual play with Romance as a genre of modern popular fiction, and parodies the way romanesque² narratives are constructed on "timeless" stereotypical representations of femininity, masculinity, sex and love.

The parameters in which the "love affair" between the narrator and Markos takes place are carefully delineated to imply a traditionally romantic narrative environment, and in that sense "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" may not be strictly defined as a Romance but it is surely romantic, that is, its subject matter is 'something that could happen in a romance'.

²G. Beer uses the French word 'romanesque' as the equivalent of the English and German 'romantic' which still means essentially 'something that could happen in a romance'(1970:59).

As Gillian Beer has argued, the romance is still a popular genre, primarily written to entertain by telling a story of sexual love between a man and a woman. Furthermore, romances show ideal worlds which are very close to the forms of our own society but whose imaginative perfection can never be attained in life. Since the romantic worlds are governed by high moral codes, and because they present idealized situations, they are implicitly instructive as well as escapist. Beer gives a cluster of properties for a romance: "the themes of love and adventure, a certain withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both the reader and romance hero, profuse sensual detail, simplified characters[...] a happy ending, amplitude of proportions, a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply"(Beer 1970:10).

Because romances tell a simple story of the relationships between men and women who live in a totally imagined world which the reader inhabits as long as the reading lasts, and which is "preoccupied by complex moral issues, acted out by characters living according to a conscious code of conduct"(Beer 1970:79), they are often easy reading since they require no special knowledge, but just "draw upon archetypal patterns which meet an understanding in the reader without necessarily formalizing into consciousness"(Beer 1970:19).

Romance has been called a 'feminine' genre because it gives a major role to women and to affairs of love, sexual or otherwise, and it is still primarily targeted at a female

readership in the Mills and Boon or Harlequin varieties. This is despite the fact that, as Carol Thurston (1987) has argued in her extensive study of contemporary popular romance, it has changed, having invented new formulae since the coming of age of the women's movement. The way women are portrayed in it has changed, along with the traditional power relationships between men and women in erotic romances, to depict a new, more balanced power arrangement as natural and expected as the norm. Since romantic narratives are primarily directed towards women readers and since, by the very definition of their romantic character, their stories and the characters in them always have to move within fixed moral codes, romances can never shed their instructive function; they always provide women with lessons in femininity as if it were some 'natural' attribute of their sex. It is precisely that instructive function of romantic narratives and their targetting of women readers that "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" uses and subverts through parodying its 'naturalness' by the use of the cats as protagonists in an exploration of the implications of claims about a 'natural' female sexuality, and by creating a coherent illusion in fiction only to undo it in fiction.

1. 1. The Romantic Setting

Before discussing in detail the kinds of female sexuality put forth in the narrative of "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" it is important to examine how the romantic setting of the "love affair" between

the narrator and Markos plays on the romantic implications of the genre as a whole.

In most respects, including the unhappy ending, Zyranna Zateli's short story does not go far from genre requirements, except for its unheroic male protagonist. The broader setting of the "love affair" is in a neighbourhood which serves as a microcosm of society in which everyone lives by traditional rules, in which everyone knows what everyone else is doing and certainly cares about this knowledge. Furthermore, the details concerning the acceptability of a "love affair" are very carefully set out since the narrator's "love affair" is excused both by the neighbourhood and the family because on a metaphorical level she is engaged to be married to Markos, and thus falls into the appropriate and the acceptable, and on the literal level she is just a little girl playing games with her cat. Moreover, the title being 'last year's fiancée', which gives a clue to the unhappy ending of the story, on the other hand implies that after such an openly public relationship with a man, according to societal norms, a woman who has failed to attain marriage is also not in demand, 'second hand', out of fashion, or to use a Greek expression, she is "shelved".

The narrated events in "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" are basically very simple, delivered in the first person and in the past tense in a very smoothly flowing, almost banal style; it comes complete with love at first sight, engagement, an Other Woman and despite not having a gloriously happy ending, the tragic conclusion is

marked by the regrettable death of the male lover. It is described through the hilarious clichés that are considered an integral part of romantic narratives, and which serve to bring forth the subtle parody, triggered belatedly in the last line of the text, after the revelation of the species of the male partner.³

As Hutcheon argues "many parodies today do not ridicule the backgrounded texts but use them as a standard by which to place the contemporary under scrutiny"(Hutcheon 1985:57). Since the narrator of "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" is neither given a proper name

³Moreover, the specific dates given [the engagement takes place at night on New Year's Eve 1961 (7) and it lasts two years and seven days until the ninth of January 1963 (18,19)] provide a feeling of accuracy and authenticity, a feeling that this is a true story, combined with the advent of sexual permissiveness that the reference to the sixties implies, although not strictly applicable to the social reality of Greece at the time, help to keep the reader focused on the metaphorical level of the story, and further distract one from the irony offered on the literal level, principally by the fact that Markos is a cat. In terms of specific chronological references, there are interesting parallels to be drawn between "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" and Y. Xanthoulis' novel *Το Πεθαμένο Λικέρ*(1987). Xanthoulis' novel is set like Zatelli's short story in a primarily domestic environment which revolves around the sexual explorations of three children. As in "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" the erotic game between the girl and the cat is excused within the context of sixties, in *Το Πεθαμένο Λικέρ* the specific reference to the late 1950's reinforces the forbidden nature of the sexual games in the simultaneous marriage of two boys (twin brothers) to the same girl (their sister), which begins on Christmas day 1957 and lasts until April/May 1959.

nor acts out her sexuality in the traditional way, the parody is not so much that of specific sex-role models proposed by the rather unfortunate heroes and heroines of romantic fictions but of the genre itself. "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" scrutinizes not only the way in which masculine and feminine sexual identities pass as natural in a patriarchal society, but also the way romantic narratives are constructed so as to propagate these stereotypes through their indirectly prescriptive and instructive function.

As the narrative of "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" is set in the microcosm of a traditional neighbourhood, the people who make up this mini society (the 'others' to the "love affair" of the narrator and Markos) assume the role of what Stephen Nichols calls 'onlookers', the guardians of the patriarchal order, who "watch and pose questions of their own, regarding the behaviour of the lovers[...]making them justify their behaviour before the collectivity [or even] forcing them to call their love by another name if necessary to fit the context of public life"(1985:50). Either because on a metaphorical level a "love affair" cannot be allowed outside societal prescriptions, or because on a literal level a girl cannot have a literal "love affair" with her pet cat, the affair between the narrator and Markos has to be set in a legitimated narrative frame, and therefore an engagement is performed (as it is traditionally appropriate), and is described with all the symbolic portentousness of white and virginal imagery appropriate to traditionally romantic narratives:

Μυστικά τέλεσαμε τον αρραβώνα. Όχι στην κάμαρα μπροστά στους άλλους, αλλά έξω στις σκάλες βγήκαμε. Μες το

σκοτάδι, σ' ένα ευχάριστο κρύο. Χιόνιζε και η ασπράδα του χιονιού έκαναν πραγματικά ονειρική εκείνη τη νύχτα[...] σαν όνειρο[...] μυστικός ο αρραβώνας μας, κρυφός και ιερός.(7)

The engagement is performed in secret defiance of the others, but according to their rules so that the realistic economy of the narrative will not be disturbed; and indeed it never is, because everything outside the unusual relationship of the lovers lies on a traditional level, both in terms of the narrator's house and family as well as in terms of the local *kafeneio*.

Appropriately, the onlookers retain the roles that have been traditionally assigned to males, mentioned only in connection with the public place of the *kafeneio*, and to females, mentioned only in relation to the household. Among an indistinct unmarried female crowd are Marianthi and Persefone, and Olympia, who is

η πιο ταπεινή και ήσυχη φιγούρα που πέρασε, σα μάνα, απ' τη ζωή μου, μα που απ' τα πολλά αμίλητα αρρώσταινε πότε πότε[...] μετά, πολύ γρήγορα συνήθως, της περνούσε το κακό, και ξαναγίνονταν μια ψυχή στο παράθυρο, σκυμμένη στην δαντέλλα που έπλεκε και την τύλιγε γύρω γύρω σαν κουβάρι, μέχρι που έπιανε άλλη στο ίδιο σχέδιο πάντα, με τον ίδιο ρυθμό, αγαθή και αμίλητη πάλι, συχνά νυσταγμένη, να τα γυρνάει όλα μέσα της(12)

an image of the eternally muted housebound female. The men in the narrative of "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" inhabit the distinctly male setting of the local *kafeneio* "Ο Αναστεναγμός" and in a way comparable to the muted housebound women, they just sigh their troubles away upon entering every time "είχαν δεν είχαν κάτι. Μόλις έμπαιναν, και κάθε τόσο μετά όσο να φύγουν"(22).

The rather liberal relationship that the narrator had with the men of the *kafeneio*, which is inexplicable on the metaphorical level of the story, because they allowed her briefly to enter the bastion of male privacy, can only be accounted for on the literal level of the story by the fact that she was a little girl whom the men called to amuse them or to run small errands for them "με φώναζαν οι άντρες να τους πάρω τσιγάρα απ' το περίπτερο και καμιά εφημερίδα τ' έναν του διάβαζα σε συνέχειες, γιατί δεν ήξερε γράμματα, τον Τσακιτζή τον λήσταρχο του Αϊβαλιού- άλλοτε για να τους λέω κανένα τραγούδι"(21). So she was able to observe what went on in this male world only because of her age "και μ' άφηναν, το ήθελαν κι αυτοί, να κάθομαι μαζί τους, να τους βλέπω που παίζουν ζάρια και τράπουλα ή λέγαν ιστορίες και τους άκουγα απ' του Νώε τον καιρό"(21). It is also due to the literal age of the narrator that in their most private hours of sighing the men even occasionally inquired about Markos' health, being in control of the real situation and thus able to use appropriately metaphorical language "τι κάνει ο πρίγκιπας σου[...] ο δερβίσης σου"(21) in playing the young girl's game. However, when the narrator replied "κοιμάται[...] αυτός δεν είναι σαν εσάς"(22) she stated a narrative truth not only on the literal level because Markos is a cat and not human, but on a metaphorical level as well because not one of the males in the *kafeneio* would have a sexual relationship with a female under the parameters set out by the narrator, and therefore Markos is definitely not like any human man in every sense of the word.

It should be kept in mind that if Markos and Myrsa are taken to be cats by the reader, their behaviour and the child-narrator's behaviour need not be considered abnormal. Thus, it is precisely because Markos is not a human male that all onlookers, both male and female, never object to the lovers disappearing frequently to the room they shared when looking for some privacy for their strongly sensual "love affair": "κανείς δεν μας πήρε είδηση, μα και να μας έπαιρνε δεν ήταν κάτι που συνέβαινε για πρώτη φορά ώστε να τους παραξενέψει. Κάθε μέρα μας έβλεπαν να χανόμαστε"(8). It is also because the metaphorical lovers are not a real woman and a real man but literally just a little girl and a cat, that Markos' death, that marks that very revelation, is treated by the coffeeshop keeper as a significant event. Moreover, since the narrative needs to retain its metaphorical potential until the last line, its economy requires the coffeeshop keeper to run to the narrator's house before dawn to inform her of Markos' death as if he were a person. Thus it is possible for the narrator to strike the final ironic blow to the romantic suffering for loss of the beloved concept, in a mourning scene delivered once more in as hilarious clichés as the engagement scene. These scenes are joined through the image of the snow. The black and bloodstained snow of the accident alludes to the immaculately white snow of the engagement scene:

έτρεξα σαν τρελλή. Δεν άντεχα να καταλάβω τι ακριβώς είχε συμβεί [...] Στεκόμουν σαν να με χτύπησε κεραυνός κι έβλεπα τα αίματα του Μάρκου πάνω στα χιόνια[...] κόκκινα αίματα, λευκά χιόνια, κόκκινα κι αυτά απ' το αίμα...κόκκινο και το φουστάνι που τ' άρπαξα και τόσουρα μαζί μου γιατί, δεν

ήξερα- κι όλα τελικά μαύρα σαν πίσσα στο κεφάλι μου
κατάμαυρα.

Εκείνο το χρυσό του σώμα, το παραμυθένιο, ένας μπλαβίς
φρικτός εφιάλης τώρα απο λυωμένες σάρκες και χυμένα
εντόσθια, πάνω στα χιόνια. Αυτό εκεί...ο αρραβωνιαστικός μου
ο Μάρκος! «Γιά δέστονα πως κέίτεται...κομμένος κι
εσφαγμένος κι ανεγνώριστος»(21).

In the romantic setting of "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" the male partner of the romantic couple is not only unheroic but he is also of an inferior species. The only way the symbolism of heroic battle of the knight in this quest for pleasure can be retained is through the compromise of the narrative that attributes to the dead corpse of the male feline lover through the mouth of the narrator the lines of a poem "για δέστονα πως κέίτεται...κομμένος κι εσφαγμένος κι ανεγνώριστος" which actually come from an acritic song which celebrates male heroism through a wife's lament for the death of her husband.⁴

With Markos' death the narrative has to end and after the mourning scene everything moves towards the literal conclusion both of the story and the metaphorical dimension of the "love affair".

The coffeeshop keeper offers consolation to the narrator in the empty *kafeneio*, in a scene that almost smells of child abuse in the sense that the image of an adult offering sweets to a child suggests. This kind of consolation is supposed to be an old ritual

⁴ see Polites *Εκλογαί*, 'Ακριτικά Τραγούδια' No71, (1969:83).

which was performed by knowledgeable women who said "με τέχνη και με πίστη"(23) the appropriate words while the person in shock [-φρίξη-a deep inner feeling of immense τρόμος and φρίκη] was licking honey from the cutting edge of an axe so that "ο φόβος να κοπεί, να φύγει ο ίσκιος"(23). The ritual was supposed to be based on the Heracleitean notion "...καὶ ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστην ἁρμονίαν"(23) which balances the fear with something pleasurable, aiming, as the narrator says, "να σε γλυκάνουν στο σώμα και στην ψυχή. Και το κατάφεραν. Ήταν σαν να με μισοϋπνώτιζαν μες απ' την σιγανή τρυφερή ομιλία, το δέος του τσεκουριού, που την κόψη του την είχαν βουτήξει σε μέλι"(24). As the narrator's φρίξη is calmed by the Turkish delight that on the literal level of the story the coffeeshop keeper shoves into her mouth whereby order, "αρμονία", is restored and "λύτρωση" comes "ξαφνικά μετά από εκείνη την ένταση"(24) on the metaphorical level of the story things are resolved as well. After the intervention in the narrative of the image of the phallic symbol of the axe covered in honey, the coffeeshop keeper, representing patriarchal order, deems the situation unworthy of his further attention and he sends the crying girl to her mother, who is the appropriate person to deal with such 'feminine' matters as this childish fantasy. In so doing, he usurps the last line of the narrative, and puts the metaphorical aspects of the story in their rightful literal place, only to subvert the reader's accumulated expectations by simply saying to the girl "πήγαινε στη μάνα σου, μην κάνεις έτσι για μιὰ γάτα"(25).

1. 2. Tales of cats and female sexuality

The revelation that Markos is a cat forces one to approach the kinds of female sexuality presented in "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" in the light of the literary device of the metaphorical use of a male cat as the male partner of the romantic couple. In literature, cats often represent declarations of excessive sexuality, such as Myrsa in "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά", uncle Andronikos disguised as a ginger cat in Kosmas Polites' *Eroica* ⁵, or as Zola in Zenon Lefakis' "Η Ιστορία της Κοκκινότριχας".

In examining a text which involves a little girl and a male cat, one should examine the kind of desire the little girl has and the kind of cat the cat is. Thus, Zenon Lefakis' "Η Ιστορία της Κοκκινότριχας" (1910) will be briefly discussed because, like "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" it involves a "sexual relationship" between a little girl and a cat, and it has an unhappy end as the subtitle suggests "που δεν είχε αγαπητικό και έπεσε στην πράσινη λίμνη". Although Lefakis' story does not deploy the male cat as a metaphor for a human lover, it is set in the environment of a house and a small village and it involves a little girl's discovery of a hitherto unknown sexual pleasure.

The story of the young Kokkinitriha who has red hair, in the way Little Red Ridinghood has a red riding hood, takes place in

⁵ Peter Mackridge argues that the apparition of Andronikos as a ginger haired cat in *Eroica* serves to symbolise "[τον] αχαλίνωτ[ο] έρωτα"(1982:83).

her house and carries all the sexual implications of that fairytale. The girl lives a quite ordinary life with her sick brother, her father Marpas, and a cat named Zola, until one day a woman appears unexpectedly and becomes Marpas' lover. She has a beautiful laugh, a silver rose in her hair, a sparkling ring on her finger, and her hands and neck are 'full of milk', and with her sad voice she always sings a sad song. As the epitome of lustful temptation, she comes into Marpas' world by also trying to seduce Marpas' much older next-door neighbour. Finally she gives the apple she had just bitten into to a young newcomer, immediately making him her new lover. This woman becomes the model of the female, and sets out the parameters of the quest for pleasure that the young and bashful Kokkinotriha embarks upon.

Zola,⁶ the family cat is very mean, aggressive and selfish "είταν άσπρος και τη γλώσσα τήν είχε κόκκινη. Επαιζε και καλά. Επινε ποντίκια. Μα δεν τάπιγε στη στιγμή, τάπαιζε καλά και έπειτα τα δάγκανε έτσι δα με μιά"(52). However in Lefakis' story Zola engages in another game with the beautiful woman, an activity which is quite new to Kokkinotriha:

το γάτο αυτόν τον αγαπούσε η γυναίκα και του έπαιζε
ωράια. Του έκαμνε ένα παράξενο παιχνίδι. Τον έβαζε πρώτα
κάτω απ' τα φουστάνια της, έπειτα τον σκουντούσε με τα
πόδια της και του φώναζε -Αϊντε Ζολά. Αϊντε Ζολά. Κι ο
γάτος ο Ζολάς στριφογυρίζονταν μέσα στις γάμπες της και

⁶ The name of the cat as Gounelas argues "ίσως είναι υπαινιγμός στον Λιμίλιο Ζολά, ο οποίος ως εισηγητής του νατουραλισμού υποστήριζε την ύπαρξη της αναπόφευκτης δύναμης των κληρονομικών καταβολών"(Gounelas 1987:59).

στο τέλος τις έγλυφε όσο μπορούσε και πρόφταινε. Και η γυναίκα με το ωραίο γέλιο κοκκίνιζε και ήταν όλο χαρά(53).

Kokkinotriha likes this game and it is not long before she gives it a name:

τόλεγε το παιχνίδι αυτό, το κόκκινο και το χαρωπό παιχνίδι της γυναίκας που κάνει την καρδιά να τρέμη. Τόλεγε κόκκινο γιατί έκανε τη γυναίκα κόκκινη. Χαρωπό γιατί γελούσε ύστερα απ' το παιχνίδι, όσο για την καρδιά που έτρεμε, το φαντάζονται, και πολύ σωστά, γιατί είτανε ένας κοτζάμ γάτος αυτός που έγλυφε και γαργάλιζε τις γάμπες(53).

Since Zola, such a big cat, gives such enormous pleasure to the woman, Kokkinotriha soon forgets everything else that puzzles her, and she too begins to play the game, content but also slightly afraid of her new discovery:

Όσο για τον Κατσαρομάλλη, ούτε λόγος να γίνεται, ποτέ δεν τον συλλογιζότανε. Κάποτε ολίγο το Ζολά το γάτο της, γιατί αυτός είτανε καλός και την αγαπούσε. Έτσι φαίνεται γιατί της έκαμνε συχνά τώρα το κόκκινο και το χαρωπό παιχνίδι της γυναίκας που έκαμε την καρδιά να τρέμει. Και η Κοκκινότριχα όλο έτρεμε με το παιχνίδι αυτό, μα και γελούσε λίγο(55).

As the little girl embarks on the experience with Zola only after observing the admired beautiful older woman, as soon as her role model focuses her attentions on a young man who comes to the village, she rushes to give him an apple she has bitten into just as she had seen the woman do whenever she wished to conquer a new lover. Unfortunately, in her rush, Kokkinotriha drops the apple, the woman takes it, gives it herself to the man and makes him hers. After pleading openly with the young man

"Έλα και με μένα νέε αγαπητικέ της γυναίκας. Είμαι κι εγώ ωραία[...] έλα και θα σου δείξω το κορμί μου, κι είναι ζεστό σαν το δικό σου χέρι, και είναι κι οι γάμπες μου ζεστές και θα τις χαδέβης και θάναι δικές σου, ως νέε αγαπητικέ της γυναίκας"(55) and after failing miserably to arouse his sexual attentions Kokkinotriha finds herself having lost every source of pleasure because Zola soon dies, killed by the young man:

Μα ξεχάσαμε να σας πούμε[...] πως ο Ζολάς ο γάτος[...] ψόφησε. Οχι, ξαφνικά καλύτερα τον σκότωσαν. Και μάλιστα ο αγαπητικός ο νέος. Γιατι θαρρούμε πως η γυναίκα η αγαπητικιά του το έκαμε μπροστά του το παιχνίδι αυτό με το Ζολά το γάτο[...] και θα θύμωσε ύστερα ο νέος με το Ζολά το γάτο που έγλυφε τις γάμπες της αγαπητικιάς του, και θα τον σκότωσε. Έτσι φαίνεται (55).

Zola, the cat, can be excused by patriarchy as a symbol of desire but not as an actual means of giving sexual pleasure, therefore as soon as the young man takes over the beautiful woman's life he immediately eliminates all other sources of pleasure for her. He kills Zola because the cat not only offered pleasure to his woman but did so upon request. It is not the jealousy of a male being replaced by another male in the pleasure given to a woman which prompts the killing, because there is no real competition between a human male and a male cat. Rather the conflict arises from the unforgivable way in which this pleasure is provided. It is done upon invitation and request by the woman, it does not involve penetration and, most importantly, it happens under a woman's skirt, thus distorting the sexual overtones of "covering" in the sexual act which, as set out by

patriarchy, pertain only and always to the male role, designating the female's position eternally as "femme couverte".

When, in this story, as in "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά", order is established through the intervention of a powerful male, the end comes with the woman who, knowing better than Kokkinotriha, soon forgets about Zola and the pleasure game, and goes off with the young man along the blooming path, whereas Kokkinotriha "που δεν είχε αγαπητικό κι έπεσε στην πράσινη λίμνη" as the subtitle suggested, goes after Zola and the kind of pleasure he promised "έκλεισε, σφιχτά τότες τα μάτια της για να μην κλάψη και έπεσε μέσα στην πράσινη λίμνη που είχε τις λάσπες και τα νερά πολύ ήσυχα και επήγε νάβρη...το γάτο της το Ζολά που έγλυφε τις γάμπες της και τη χάδεβε και που τον σκότωσε ο αγαπητικός ο νέος από την κακία του τη μεγάλη"(56). As the limits in which the woman's sexuality is allowed to flourish are delineated by the male lover and the pleasure that he offers, all other kinds of pleasure, namely any pleasure that is initiated by and depends solely on the wishes and commands of the female as in the case of Zola, even if it is with a cat, is unacceptable, as any manifestation of a sovereign independent feminine sexuality is as well.

Whereas in Lefakis' story the mature woman's sexuality is allowed only in the form that it follows the young male lover's wishes and commands, setting the patriarchal standard of feminine sexuality in general, when one turns to the kinds of

sexuality discussed in "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" the 'moral' of the story is quite different.⁷

The main representations of female sexuality in Zateli's story are those of the narrator and Markos' mother, Myrsa. The narrator's sexuality is presented as defined by a female in a feminine way and therefore, as such, it becomes the opposite of the patriarchal condemnation of female sexuality as non-existent, motherly, or passive. Myrsa's sexuality is portrayed as the patriarchal definition of the sexuality of the fallen woman, the hysteric, the obsessed, the uncontrollable female passion which can be destructive if unmediated by the male logical powers of constraint. However, in both cases female sexuality is put forth with reference to how close it is to a natural sexual

⁷ Despite the obvious differences between the two stories, it is nevertheless important to stress their equally strong subversive potential. It is quite surprising that Lefakis' short story, which appeared in *Ο Νουμάς* in 1910, should even have a representation of female sexuality at all. However, even if one follows Gounelas' reading of the story, [which is triggered, among other factors, by the preception of *Κοκκινότριχα* as an analogue of the demoticists, the 'μαλλιανοί', as well as by Z. Lefakis' dedication of the story to the "διαλεχτούς Ψυχάρη, Χρηστομάνο, Παλαμά, Ταγκόπουλο"] namely that "δεν πρόκειται για μία ψυχαναλυτική παρουσίαση του σεξουαλικού προβλήματος της έφηβης κόρης[...]η αλληγορία του διηγήματος πιστεύουμε ότι σχετίζεται με το επίκαιρο πρόβλημα των προοδευτικών, την αποκατάσταση της γλώσσας του λαού"(1987:58), the subversive potential of the story against the dominant discourse of the time, be it language or sexuality, remains intact.

norm for the female sex. The narrative's mirroring of Myrsa's and the narrator's sexuality which appears to be equally grounded on the same terms and which, in both cases, is put forth as the natural way of being for the female, is finally subverted by the fact that since the two antithetical positions have the same basic premise they therefore cancel each other out.

The kind of sexuality that the narrator displays is made obvious from the opening scene. She and Markos met, "slept together" from the first night and later she said to him: "Δεν αρραβωνιαζόμαστε Μάρκο; Να δούμε πώς νοιώθουν όταν αρραβωνιάζονται. Αν δεν μας αρέσει, ένας λόγος είναι, τον παίρνουμε πίσω και συνεχίζουμε όπως τώρα. Αν μας αρέσει, μένουμε έτσι ώσπου να βαρεθούμε και βλέπουμε μετά"(8). Before the narrator proposed to Markos she chose him "κάτι μου μίλησε σ' αυτόν με την πρώτη ματιά"(8), gave him a name "είσαι ο Μάρκος"(8) and invited him to live with her, setting the textual pace of a woman going after the object of her desire in a new way, whilst at the same time initiating, announcing and beginning things that will give her pleasure. It becomes a reversal of the dominant role not only for parodying purposes but also in Irigaray's sense (1985) of being a strategy to overturn the hierarchies of power.

The female names the male, thereby naming its role as well. The reversal is so complete that as in the traditional male centered patterns of action, the concept of female consent has little or no meaning, here Markos becomes the silent, muted party.

Markos' lack of consent to the narrator's proposals is disguised by his supposedly meaningful movements. Such an illusion is soon cleared because he does not even move to avoid the truck and save his life: "άκουσε το φορτηγό που ερχόταν από πάνω[...]κι ανασηκώθηκε μιαν ιδέα, σάλεψε. Θα σκέφτηκε υποθέτω να σηκωθεί η έστω να μετακινηθεί απλώς, να πάει λίγο πιο στην άκρη, αλλά τελικά θα σκέφτηκε πάλι- γιατί; Κι έμεινε εκεί που ήταν"(19). The textual construction of movement as a means of denoting agreement or refusal, is again subverted by Markos' being a cat; hence his lack of speech and his being devoid of significant movement.

The narrator's sexuality lies close to a *jouissance* in Cixous' sense, (1986:165) which apart from meaning an orgasm or total sexual ecstasy implies total access and total participation as well.

The narrator, a woman auto-erotically familiar with herself, has no need to claim ownership. What is important to her is "nearness which makes all discrimination of identity and thus all forms of property impossible"(Irigaray 1985:31). Therefore she makes it clear that she and Markos "δεν είχαμε ανάγκη από καταστάσεις σαφώς σαρκικές για να νοιώθουμε ενωμένοι ή για να γνωριστούμε καλύτερα"(14) and she did not mind him having sexual relationships with other "women" because she considered these minor affairs analogous to exercising his physical bodily needs and thus bringing again into focus the "naturalness" of the promiscuity allocated to males.

The way the narrator pleasures with Markos is described as the most remarkable "αξιοσημείωτο"(15) factor of their relationship and goes on in three stages: first they look into each other's eyes in a way that was their "secret treasure": "όχι όπως κοιτάζουμε κάτι ή κάποιον χωρίς να ξέρουμε καλά - καλά τι κοιτάζουμε ή και συχνά χωρίς να ξέρουμε καν ότι κοιτάζουμε, μα[...] με άκρα προσήλωση, επιμονή, και βαθύτητα[...] απόλυτα σοβαροί[...] ασάλευτοι κι ατάραχοι[...] μια φάση άψογης σιγής. Σιγής και μυστηρίου. Κοιταζόμασταν, κοιταζόμασταν. Μια ιδανική τολμώ να πώ, αλληλοατένιση, μιά ομφαλοσκόπηση του καθενός στα μάτια του άλλου"(15,16). Achieving what Cixous describes as the desired nearness which in turn affirms the gap between them "as a 'space between,' where difference is experienced as pleasure" (Cixous 1986:166), the narrator realizes through the eyes of Markos the mystery of the world and the self and pleasures in a series of yet more hilarious clichés "και γινόταν η σιωπή ένα με τον αέρα που αναπνέαμε, με τον ήλιο αν ήταν μέρα, με το φώς της λάμπας αν ήταν νύχτα"(15) in an ecstasy unshaken even by the earthquake that drove everyone else out of the house screaming. In the second stage they start twitching at each other in fierce competition and in the third stage when Markos' eyes change colour, as if it meant something, the narrator finally achieves *jouissance* from his body not as a source nor as a wider organ, but by exciting herself multiply since, in Irigaray's sense, as a woman she has sex organs everywhere.

Therefore she pleasures her fingers by feeling his bones "πιλατεύω τα κόκκαλα του"(17), her tongue, by leaning over his belly

"έγερνα στην κοιλιά του και τον έγλειφα"(17), her nose, by rubbing it on his teeth "έγερνα και άγγιζα με τη μύτη μου τα λεπτά μυτερά του δόντια"(17). The last part of her pleasuring involves a little whim of hers for Markos to sleep in her favourite red cotton dress. The red dress, token of a femininely named and practised *jouissance* crowns the achievement as Markos, in line with the original reversal, becomes "un homme couvert" and almost evaporates as he crawls in there "απαλά-απαλά σαν ατμός. Η μάλλον σα να χωνόταν, σα να βούλιαζε μ' όλο το σώμα του μέσα σε ατμούς...Ωραία ήταν όλα αυτά. Ωραίες βραδιές"(18).

The narrator's sexuality is female-specific. It is about feminine *jouissance* in a *feminine* way. It is the active, pleasure-fulfilling, assertive kind of sexuality of a femininity resulting from the reversal of the traditional hierarchy.

Markos, the male in this feminine *jouissance* process, does not appear to gain pleasure or even to consent to this activity, in fact he is not even asked and so he is found to be indifferent or "να δυσανασχετεί[...] να αχνοβρυχάται μισοαπειλητικά, μισοθλιμένα"(16). He only wishes to sleep and the narrator permits him to do so after her pleasuring is over, ironically and very provocatively stating that "Σηκωνόμουν λοιπόν και του ετοίμαζα να κοιμηθεί. Τον λάτρευα και δεν ένοιωθα καθόλου «υπηρέτρια» με το νάχω τόση στοργή κι απασχόληση σ' ότι αφορούσε αυτόν και τον ύπνο του"(18) when in a sense in fact he serves her. He remains the frigid, muted, silent, passive, powerless part of the couple, pointing to the fact that in a reversal of the hierarchies of power nothing is really altered in

essence if "the formerly 'inferior' term occupies the position of the 'superior' term without altering the nature of their relations"(Irigaray 1985:221).

But Markos is a male cat and he lends to the text the fact that he is male without forcing any of the human patriarchal values of maleness upon it. The drawback that a femininely-specific *jouissance* presents in manifesting itself through simple reversal, is subverted because Markos is not a man whose equal and full participation was denied or neglected. He is a cat with whom a little girl played. Therefore if what they did seemed natural for humans one should re-examine what one considers natural.

On the subject of discussing 'naturalness' it is important to point out that the narrator, as the primary persona in "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά", never goes on the quest to attain the beloved, -a natural condition in classic romantic narratives- because she has already got him and is able to get satisfaction on her terms through the specifics of their love-affair, her quest being one for sexual pleasure. Furthermore, since Markos is a cat and she is a little girl the need to struggle for anyone's erotic attention does not arise at all. However, the predatory element of a quest, no matter what the goal, materializes in the narrative through the role of Myrsa's sexuality which in the story is governed by a ceaseless and aggressive quest for sexual satisfaction.

Myrsa is actively demanding sexual fulfillment from the male, going after it, provoking it, taking advantage of it,

considering no expense or consequence, not even incest. She is the extreme of the Other Woman in Romance, an overdone version of the woman with the beautiful smile in Lefakis' story before the young lover saved her from the evils that awaited her unrestrained nature.

The sexuality of Myrsa, in so far as she is presented in the text as a woman, is described as organ-oriented. In fact it is hysteric, for as Irigaray puts it she is miming male sexual aggressiveness. In so far as Myrsa is described in human terms, she is depicted in terms of cat-related metaphors which connote, by patriarchal standards, symbols of excessive desire almost to the point of disease. Myrsa was a wildcat "σωστή αγριόγατα"(9), "αχόρταγη στον έρωτα"(9) notorious for not letting any male escape her sexual greed, when she suffered from that "rage" - "λύσσα"(9), "ερωτική απληστία και βάσανο[...]μανία στο κορμί"(10)that overwhelmed her body and mind. A devilish female "δαιμόνιο θηλυκό"(11) who could become an enraged cat one moment and a virgin dove the next, she was unmatched in being able to lure males through a beauty that still was remarkable, no matter how many times she had given birth and how many orgies she had had: "ήταν χωρίς αμφιβολία όμορφη η Μύρσα. Κι αγέραστη μ' όσες γέννες κι αν είχε κάνει κι όσα όργια"(12). She was a vortex that devoured males in her pleasuring. She used the phallus, and when she could not have it due to the unwillingness of the male, she resorted to a fierce rubbing of her organ on the male's body to quench her excitement "down there", as the text politely states.

She was so ruthless that she even provoked Markos, her son, as the narrator tells us, going through "unspeakable" rituals. She rubbed her sex on his belly and as he still remained apathetic she hit him and forced his head between her legs almost to the point that he could not breathe rendering him an "homme couvert" in an enforced version of 'the red and happy game of the woman which made the heart tremble' as Kokkinotriha called it.

The narrator, at first angry at Myrsa's behaviour, threw her out of bed condemning her incestuous appetite. Later though she stood by, observing how far she would go "να δω ως που ήταν ικανή να φτάσει"(10). What the narrator saw made her "για πρώτη φορά να νοιώσω ζήλεια σαν γυναίκα όχι ζήλεια ακριβώς, κάτι άλλο ήταν"(10). She swore at Myrsa using a terrible 'masculine' swear word "τη σκρόφα"(11), her eyes moist with jealousy. But then she just laughed complicitly as she realized the Myrsa was out only for "some moments of pleasure" and said: "και στο κάτωκάτω γυναίκα είναι. Σώμα είναι αυτό από σάρκα και οστά. Δεν είναι σίδηρο. Κι ένα σώμα σαν της Μύρσας και γιατί όχι σαν το δικό μου, δεν κάνει διακρίσεις δεν έχει φραγμούς"(11) and even more "γι' αυτήν υπήρχε μόνον ο έρωτας μ' όποιον έβρισκε μπροστά της, και οι στιγμές της ηδονής της ηδονής και τίποτα άλλο, μη φανταστεί κανείς πως ήταν πόρνη έφταναν για να δικαιώσουν τη φύση της"(13).

Lack of jealousy and free acceptance of another woman's sexual particularity denotes a woman who, as Cixous would argue, has had eyes for herself, who has gone exploring, whose

sex does not frighten her, who has dared enjoy her body(Cixous 1986:68).

On the other hand, Myrsa's aggressive sexuality can also be perceived as what Mary Wollstonecraft (1975:116,177) imagined it to be, namely "a contagion caught from the projection of male lust, an ensnaring and enslaving infection that makes women into dependent and degenerate creatures, who nevertheless have the impression that they act independently"(Kaplan 1985:157).

In that sense, Myrsa's hysteric sexuality, presented in the text in human terms, although satisfying, is a product of the system even as an abnormality of it. It is an excessive, threatening clinical passion, a disease that can be a source of disorder and has to be controlled or eliminated. In fact, in the narrative a doctor operates on Myrsa and from then on, sterilized for her own good, her adventures become scarce: "της έκανε στείρωση, έτσι είπαμε όλοι, και από τότε η Μύρσα δεν ξανάμεινε έγκυος, αν και συνέχισε πότε πότε να ξεπορτίζει τις νύχτες"(13).

One must however always come back to the fact that Markos' mother, Myrsa, metaphorically the lustful wildcat of the narrative, turns out to be *literally* a cat. Thus what is considered unnatural in terms of her sexuality as a woman could be natural in terms of her sexual behaviour as a cat. The same of course applies to the narrator who metaphorically achieved *jouissance* by reversing the hierarchy of power, by defining the role that the male should play with respect to that process, and by constructing her sexuality with regard to the specifics of the

female body. However, this biologicistic attitude, which draws on natural characteristics, is subverted through the narrative of "Περσινή αρραβωνιαστικιά" because it defines and constitutes a new system of assumptions that point to an essentially feminine sexuality which is based literally on the fictional relationship between a little girl and her pet cat and thus subverts all claims of naturalness.

Markos is not a proper lover because he is not human. The narrative knows that this is so from the beginning and whoever is reading the story and objects to Markos' passivity does so because one has learned through years of conditioning to the stereotypes of masculine and feminine behaviour that such a man does not exist. Thus under the discussion of female sexuality, the masculine image, that is male nature, comes under analysis as well and is exposed as much as the construction of the narrative's use of a cat in the place of a human. The projection of the animal's sexuality on a human role, alludes to the projection of human sexual stereotypes on animal behaviour in the narratives of nature programmes, and parodies the constructions of masculine or feminine sexuality as well as the type of romantic narratives that propagate these role models as naturally female or male. In so doing, the narrative also puts the reader in a position where one is forced to review one's ideas of the 'natural' distinctions between masculine and feminine attributes and modes of behaviour as one tries, through reinterpreting what one has read, to come out of the sexual and moral trap that the narrative has constructed.

Through the narrative construction of two cats presented in human terms and through language that appears to be metaphorical but in the end turns out to be literal, the patriarchal advocacy of a sexuality stemming from biological sex is parodied and presented as a social construction.

Thus, the story narrated in "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" can be read as a deconstruction of the notion that there is such a thing as a natural female -or male for that matter- sexuality altogether.

Showing that sexual identity is not a natural given, Zyranna Zateli's short story also comments on the implications of the cultural constructions of sexual difference, both in terms of narrative representations of 'woman' as well as in terms of 'women's writing' in general. By not advocating a final role-reversal in the power struggle between the sexes, "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" attempts neither to describe nor to prescribe a more 'authentic woman', or 'woman's writing' contrasted to a 'false' one as created by the patriarchal discourses of suppression. Through its subversive narrative strategy, it undermines the traditional ways of representing 'authentic nature' and denies all claims of a 'true', and therefore irreducible, textual or physical identity that stems from a stable, central, originating referent.

CHAPTER 2

Ο ΥΠΙΝΟΒΑΤΗΣ : AN APOCALYPTIC INTERTEXT

When one explores the way "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικά" subverts the illusion of a natural and gender-specific identity, both for the text as well as for the self, one can better understand the passionate urgency which permeates Harold Bloom's discourse in *A Map of Misreading* (1975). In this "Gospel of Gloom", as he calls it, he argues that the literature of women's liberation is partly responsible for the "excessively volatile senses-of-tradition that have made canon-formation so uncertain a process[...]particularly during the last twenty years [to the effect that] our mutual sense of canonical standards has undergone a remarkable dimming, a fading into the light of a common garishness"(36). What Bloom does, in his efforts to inspire admiration for the power of the traditional literary canon, is actually to build up a defence of the importance of the past, when reality was real, because men were men and women were women. In so doing, he wishes to retrieve a reality unaffected by the images of a decadent culture promoted by feminist writing, a reality which reflects, and is reflected by, the authentic language of a 'natural' sexual identity. ¹

¹The Bloomian anti-feminist critique has recently been developed further by Camille Paglia (1991). Paglia, who studied with Bloom and is grateful "for his warm hospitality to [her] ideas", as she says in the first paragraph of the

The understanding of Nature involves an understanding of the act of Creation, as it evolves through the human creative act. This entails a struggle between fathers and sons, as delineated in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), and, of course, offers an explanation for the formation of textual and psychological male identity. As the production of knowledge, according to Bloom, therefore comes from the mechanism of influence, which determines the relation between the texts of fathers and sons, tradition is always kept alive. Tradition (that is the past) points to an originating arché, a transcendental reality, whose divine light(of the father) must illuminate the subsequent creative acts (of the son). As Bloom more aptly puts it "reject your parents vehemently enough, and you will become a belated version of them, but compound with their reality, and you may partly free yourself"(1975:38).

Being conscious of the tradition does not negate the need to be original, but instead reinforces it, in terms of being a good

acknowledgements, develops the conflict of the Apollonian (associated with the male) and Dionysian (associated with the female) modes through cultural history. In extremely anti-feminist discourse she celebrates the patriarchal achievements of what most feminists call Dead White Males, arguing that men fight to define themselves, to escape their origin in woman (the mother) and out of this battle is born great art, for which mankind should be grateful because "if civilization had been left in female hands, we would still be living in grass huts"(38).

enough writer to be included in the original canonical order whose values are eternal and unchangeable. Bloom protects the monism and the continuity of tradition against the pluralistic disruption of the literature of women as 'the other', which, as he prophesies, will be responsible for "the first true break with literary continuity [that] will be brought about in generations to come, if the burgeoning religion of Liberated Woman spreads from the cluster of enthusiasts to dominate the West"(1975:33). In *The Anxiety of Influence*, despite the fact that the poet is doomed to discover that "his word is not his word only"(1973:61), it is nevertheless imperative that in becoming a poet, one must first become a man: "the poet's stance, his Word, his imaginative identity, his whole being, *must* be unique to him, and remain unique, or he will perish"(1973:71), probably into the depths of femininity, which is the enemy of autonomy.

The anxiety of influence, for Bloom, is of almost apocalyptic proportions, described as an anxiety "in expectation of *being flooded*" (1973:57), where flooding stands for the inability to make definite distinctions, to mark the boundaries clearly and thus to be able to attribute both self as well as text to an originating fundamental arché.

2. 1. Intertextuality as Polysemy

The concept of intertextuality comes to flood the Bloomian anxiety of influence, as the very condition of textuality itself, designating all texts as intertexts, distracting the search for

origins and subverting the quest for text or self-definition and wholeness.

Umberto Eco in the *Postscript to The Name of the Rose* claims that while he was writing, he found out "what writers have always known (and have always told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told"(1983,20). The idea of telling stories that have already been told does not mean to imply proof of continuity of the great ideas that permeate and survive the passing of time, but it suggests that the intertext enables simultaneously a revisitation of the past and an opening up to the future, interrupting the continuity of the notions of expressing single meanings or one great original truth about human nature through polysemy; in other words, multiplicity and simultaneity. As Julia Kristeva says, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another"(1986:37). Intertextuality, as a process of "transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another", therefore implies that the passage from one signifying system into another demands a transformation of what was already available, and through this transformation it therefore denies any text's "place of enunciation and its denoted object as single complete and identical to themselves, but always as plural, shattered." (Kristeva 1984:59-60)

Intertextuality challenges the notions of singularity, uniqueness, autonomy, authenticity and originality for any text,

and suggests that to consider a work 'original' in the traditional sense implies a fixed text that cannot *mean*, since texts cannot generate anything, and cannot be transformed, until they are perceived by a reader. Moreover, since in Michael Riffaterre's sense, literature always involves a text, a reader and his or her reactions to it, it follows that texts cannot exist in isolation, cannot be unique or untransformable but can only exist in relation to other texts, as intertexts, always being referred to and referring to "the corpus of texts the reader may connect with the one before his/her eyes, that is, the texts brought to mind by what he/she is reading"(Riffaterre 1980: 626).

2. 2. 'Revelation' under the Apocalyptic Light

'The Book of Revelation', having given the genre of apocalyptic literature its name, is part of a vast intertextual network. It is one of the most discussed religious texts, with a long history of interpretations, by theologians and non-theologians alike, who always approach it with great respect either as God's final word, or, simply as an imaginative literary creation, in whose statements the ultimate message, with regard to what lies beyond history, is possibly contained. In this sense, it is quite revealing that two major Greek poets, Seferis(1966) and Elytis(1985) have translated the "Revelation of John" into modern Greek, but neither of them called the published text simply a 'translation'. Elytis called it "Μορφή", and Seferis "Μεταγραφή". The choice of the words "Μορφή"/"Μεταγραφή" seems to connote a recognition of one's inability to directly

partake of its sanctity, while at the same time it seems to denote that the poets will indirectly inscribe their own mark through the translation process, by subtly offering an interpretation (as is always the case with translations), thereby making a personal comment on the ultimate text itself. It is as if in interpretations of this text, be they deeply religious shapings of the images of the future, or secular science fiction (no matter what the starting point may be), the aim is always to present an account of the possibility of finally being part of some original perfection. One can argue that at the heart of the apocalyptic lies an expression of deep dissatisfaction with present world disorder and a concentration of hope upon a radically different future.

John's Revelation is a message from brother to brother, which comes nonetheless under divine direction (God to Jesus to Angel to John) "Γράψον οὖν ἃ εἶδες, καὶ ἃ εἰσὶ καὶ ἃ μέλλει γίνεσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα" (I, 19) and therefore comes essentially from 'out of this world'. The message, delivered in John's writing through visionary imagery and cryptic symbols, and being 'out of this world', presents a totally whole structured truth about everything, as it contains past history, the real present and a vision of the future. The apocalyptic message has universal implications; it concerns itself with and promises not only a new earth but also a new heaven "οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν"(21,1). The prerequisite for the apocalyptic, though, is a time of universal crisis, since a prophecy, and its promise of the future, needs first to unveil the true nature of the present. This

means that an interpretation of the present is essential to show the true nature of the situation and the time for which divine intervention is imminent. When the present is interpreted as a situation in conflict and as a time of crisis, then there should be no more delay, because "χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται"(1:3-10:6), and therefore redeeming efforts "δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει"(1:1). Salvation is a promise for the future which, for the present, is only disclosed to faith in the light of God. This light is God's truth and God's law and whoever observes it will finally unite with it upon entering the heavenly city, which "οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχει τοῦ ἡλίου οὐδὲ τῆς σελήνης ἵνα φαίνωσιν αὐτῇ· ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτήν"(21:23).

God, the Pantocrator, as presented in the Revelation, is in complete command of the whole world as its creator and governs the earth's chaotic history. He has set a goal for this history and the nations should work towards that goal that they may come and worship Him: "ἡξουσι καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου"(15,4). Under His light, and based not on any law of history, but solely on His will, the apocalyptic command "δεῖ γενέσθαι"(1:1) will be executed through His redemptive plan for history, because God works only for the salvation of man. After all, even the world in crisis, which constantly attempts to renounce its Creator, is kept under the rule of God from whose power and will everything stems -even the Antichrist's power was 'granted': "ἐδόθη αὐτῷ"(13:7)- and therefore His plan of salvation cannot and will not be disturbed.

In times of crisis, however, as the Revelation unveils, there will exist an open offer for personal decision, resting upon "the word" directed to man by God: the message of salvation is preached to the unbelievers of all the nations before the end(14:6ff). The future, for those who follow the teachings of the light, will be one of everlasting perfection. In God's light there is space for freedom in repentance through freedom of decision, and the Revelation presents itself not as a triumph of destruction and nothingness, but as a possibility of permanently healing the world's disorder "εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν"(22:3) through the final omnipotence of the light "φωτίσει ἐπ' αὐτούς[...]εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων"(22:5).

2. 3. *Ο Υπνοβάτης* as an Apocalyptic Intertext

This chapter will provide a critique of the way in which patriarchal literary tradition demands that texts be defined in terms of an impersonal and original hierarchical order of excellence. This will be done by exploring the way in which intertextual associations function in the novel *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, by Margarita Karapanou (1985)², to subvert the vision of the Apocalyptic narratives of patriarchy. It will be argued that the primacy of the existence of an originating referent will be

²Margarita Karapanou, daughter of the writer Margarita Lymberaki, was born in 1946. She has written three best-selling novels, *Η Κασσάνδρα και ο Λύκος* (1976), *Ο Υπνοβάτης* (1985) [currently in its 10th edition] and *Je Reviens* (1992).

undermined through the notion of "sleepwalking" as an analogue for the human creative act. The act of "sleepwalking" is read as a feminist position that favours multiplicity and heterogeneity in the place of the patriarchal notion of the "apocalyptic" and its promise of a permanent healing of the world's disorder, that is of a restoration of the values of the hierarchical order of the law of the Father to their original status at the time of the Divine "creative" act.

Light gives radiance, but it also casts shadow and throws objects and people into relief. Margarita Karapanou's novel as an apocalyptic intertext, comes to shed some light on the shadows that the apocalyptic light leaves behind. *Ο Υπνοβάτης* becomes an apocalyptic intertext in the first two pages which form an explanatory introduction to the rest of the text. In the narrative, God feels betrayed by the earth and the beings he created, who do not respect his law, so he puts a curse on them. He decides to send a new god "κατ' εικόνα και ομολωσιν"(10); a god they deserve, a beautiful hermaphrodite god. The heavens open and God vomits on Manolis, who, baptised Emmanuel again, heralds the beginning of a new order of worship and law.

The allusion in the introductory pages of *Ο Υπνοβάτης* suffices to introduce meaning, representation, and a set of ideas without the need to state them. It is deprived nevertheless of all the grandiose, apocalyptic contrivances that one would expect to find in a typical apocalyptic narrative and it is almost as if God's absolute divinity is questioned through his subversive

portrayal as an old man who is not sure if his creation was a hedonistic act or an act of reason³. Moreover, since the act of creation of the text's God is also compared to a childhood game or a self-indulgence, its conditions are exposed as being constructed as blatantly as those that delineated the narrator's feminine sexuality in "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά".

This God, therefore, is of secular substance, and the sending of Manolis (which is not an actual "sending" since Manolis preexisted on earth) is an act of revenge far from the apocalyptic doctrine of redemption or punishment for those who failed to live up to the dogma of God. At the same time, the secularity of the God in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* is strengthened by the reasoning behind his revenge, which is totally selfish and hedonistic: the earth should give back to God life and passion to keep him from boredom. In an inversion of the symbolic values, the divine is crudely secularized to level with a world which is disintegrating due to the lack of respect for the divine law. The new law will be of secular substance as well.

The narrative's intetextual propensity leads one to Seferis' 'Three Secret Poems'(1974), which Seferis worked on in parallel

³There are interesting parallels to be drawn in terms of the narrative choice of the subversive use of the figure of God in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* and Karapanou's first novel *Η Κασσάνδρα και ο Λύκος*, where, As Karen Van Dyck(1990) has shown, the figure of Cassandra is used to internalise the mechanisms of censorship imposed during the dictatorship, thereby transforming them into a poetics of subversion.

with the "Μεταγραφή" of the Apocalypse in 1966. In the foreword to the latter, Seferis links St. John with Heraclitus:

this work is the fruit of the moment[...]The day before, a little before midnight, I was on the island called Patmos. As day was about to break[...]not a leaf breathed in the growing light. The stillness was an unbroken shell...In this way I was drawn back to feelings I had been given before at other times by the Greek light: to that terrible blackness I had felt powerfully present behind the blue[...] The Eumenides were waiting once again behind the sun as Heraclitus had imagined them. A mechanism of self destruction was there, in motion, crushing every spark of goodwill and dedication. (Seferis 1966:9)⁴

The allusion is to Heraclitus' "the sun shall not overstep his measure; otherwise the Erinyes, handmaidens of justice, will hunt him down". With this, Heraclitus states the axiom of the standard in natural change. The sun will not be allowed to come closer to earth or to shine more than it should, because "Δίκη", who is the guardian of normality will see to it.

The relation of the 'Three Secret Poems' to the *Apocalypse* is made clear by R. M. Beaton, who argues that apart from the few close verbal echoes to the Apocalyptic text, the title of the 'Three Secret Poems' is a "semantically precise inversion of "Apocalypse" meaning "revelation"(1987:145); secondly, the numerical structure of 'Three Secret Poems' corresponds to the

⁴As translated by R.Beaton in 'From Mythos to Logos: the Poetics of George Seferis'.

magic number of the Apocalypse "three poems made up of four groups of seven sections, and the three poems and the four groups of seven add up to yet another seven"(145); and, thirdly, the title of the third poem "Summer Solstice" which is the day of St John the Divine in Greece (24th of June), "provides a link between the Christian Last Judgement and its nearest Heraclitean equivalent- when (and if) the sun oversteps its measure"(146).

It is very important to keep in mind that both "Heraclitus and St John the Evangelist had declared the first principle governing the world to be the Logos" (Beaton,1987:146) and Seferis himself sets out on a quest to come closer to the Logos through the 'Three Secret Poems'(147). The 'Three Secret Poems' become a text in which the transposition of Heraclitean ideas and the *Apocalypse* are blended and reoriented, ready for another intertextual intercourse in *Ο Υπνοβάτης*. "The secular vision of a world in dissolution" (Beaton,1987:142), of a world in which Logos is absent in the 'Three Secret Poems', is amplified in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* and by an inversion of the dramatic situation discussed earlier, Logos as the New Law is present in all its secular glory.

The 'Three Secret Poems', "Πάνω σε μιά χειμωνιάτικη αχτίνα", "Επὶ Σκηνῆς", and "Θερινό ηλιοστάσι", move, as the titles suggest, from the winter of the first poem to noon on midsummer's day. Similarly, in *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, the narrative follows the process of the light from "dark" February to the summer solstice, the day of fire itself. The summer solstice in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* is not, however,

on the 24th of June. Karapanou chooses to place it after the assumption of the Virgin on the 15th of August. This preserves, poetic licence permitting, the numerical symbolism of the apocalyptic, since the narrative now spans a period of seven months, February to August. Furthermore, the events in the narrative structure, although no obvious arrangement is present, seem to follow the thematic unfolding of the 'Three Secret Poems'. In the first seven chapters the characters are all introduced; up to chapter twenty-one the stage is set and the action is completed; and then the heat process begins and continues to the end of the text. The narrative takes place on the island of Hydra, easily identifiable to the reader by the numerous references to its places and people, for example, the *kaiki* of Aghia Eleni(136), and the house of Tombazis (21).

The island in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* is a "cosmos" in crisis in the way the *Apocalypse* demands; it is the earth itself upon which God vomits his revenge. It shelters an international community of artists and rich perverts, quite apart from the locals, and is part of a "χάρτη μυστικό, όπου βρίσκονται όλα τα μέρη που θεωρούνται μυστικά, τα μέρη που εκπέμπουν ή αγγίζονται απ' τη μαγεία"(20). At the same time it is a "λατρεμένο νησί[...]φυλακή πνιγμένη τώρα στα λουλούδια"(65), which is "άχρονο, αιώνιο, μοναδικό, ανεπανάληπτο"(72), an island to which one becomes attached with "μιά ένωση απόλυτη, ένας γάμος"(90). It is a place enclosed by the sky that "τύλιγε το νησί σαν ιστός αράχνης"(35); this island rises around its inhabitants "και τους αγκαλιάζει, τους σφίγγει, τους πνίγει, τους προστατεύει, τους λατρεύει αλύπητα"(94), "σκέτη διαστροφή αυτό το

νησί"(141), "μπορδέλο είναι αυτό το νησί[...]Πύργος της Βαβέλ"(135), which is a direct allusion to the Apocalyptic Babylon "ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς"(17: 5) and to Seferis' "πολιτεία που έγινε πορνείο" (Summer Solstice, III).

In this narrative setting of the island as a microcosmic community, of locals and international artists who form a closely knit group of people discussing the tedium of their daily lives, and exchanging views on their failure to satisfy themselves sexually and artistically, I am going to deal mainly with three characters: Manolis, the policeman and the godsent, Mark, the painter and Louka, the writer who both complete their work after they meet Manolis: the allusions to the evangelists Mark and Luke are, I believe, strong here.

Manolis had always inhabited the island, but nobody has noticed him before God vomited on him. Mark is the first to study his face as he steps into a fight, saying "είμαι το ὄργανο της τάξης"(49). Then Mark feels that only now the time has come for this person to exist. After painting him, he realises that he can never go beyond it, as finally he has found what he was looking for "μ' αυτό το πορτραίτο έφθασα στην έκφρασή μου την απόλυτη, το πορτραίτο σου είναι το απόγειο της δουλειάς μου, δεν υπάρχει πιά τίποτα πέρα απ' αυτό"(56). The "απόγειο" connotes the 'out of this world' quality of the apocalyptic, implying a condition of existence in contact with the sacred, "το θεϊόν", which in this text is as perverse as Manolis.

Louka has dreamt three times of a person she feels she knows, but of whose name she has no idea. In the police station, he just says 'my name is Manolis' and the fear of a higher love begins until she realises it herself: "Εμμανουήλ σε λένε"(96). It is his voice that was calling her in her dreams but she could not hear him.

Manolis is in love with order. For him disorder is worse than crime, whereas "το να σκοτώσεις ήταν κάτι το καθαρό, η νοσταλγία μιας τάξης"(85). As soon as all people meet him, they desire him and the spring comes.

In *Ο Υπνοβάτης* as in "Επί Σκηνής" the sun is playing games and in the 'amphitheatre' of Hydra "χαμήλωσε το φως στη σκηνή/όπως για κάποιο περιώνυμο φοινικό" (B').

Manolis first victim, Alex, is found near the sea with his back pierced by a rock, having fallen from considerable height. The woman who discovers the body says that "αυτό που της έκανε εντύπωση ήταν πως το πτώμα χαμογελούσε κοιτώντας τον ουρανό"(51).

The second victim of Manolis, Alan, who is a writer, talks about his artistic anxiety(75) in a soliloquy, almost to himself. Manolis listens, applauds and then says that "it was better than theatre". Then he kills Alan with a knife while they are having sex.

The third victim, Mina, a painter, invites Manolis to her house: "άρχισε να τριγυρίζει στο δωμάτιο, άλλαζε θέση τα έπιπλα, τα βιβλία, σαν να ετοίμαζε κάποιο σκηνικό[...] οι κινήσεις του όλο και πιο

βλαιες, πió συγκεκριμένες, σαν να κάλυπτε τα αόρατα ίχνη μίας πράξης που δεν είχε ακόμα συντελεστεί"(103). In a sacred rite of human sacrifice, with a strong undertone of a Holy Communion that the evangelic "Τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμά μου, τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ αἷμά μου" implies, it is three in the afternoon as Mina feels that her paints are his blood and she partakes of it as he smears them on her body. As the church bell strikes seven, he paints a red cross on her breasts, using it as a marker to stab her continuously and repetitively as they are having sex.

All three victims are grateful for their death at the hands of Manolis, and each of them dies in the daytime, as in "Επί Σκηνής"(Ε') "καταμεσήμερο/ το σύρσιμο του μαχαιριού...", seeking a form of violence as a change in their useless, unproductively routine lives. In *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, order is restored through murder and as the chance for redemption only passes through longing to be the victim of murder, salvation comes as total destruction.

The wish expressed in "Πάνω σε μιά Χειμωνιάτικη Αχτίνα", "ψάχνεις γωνιές όπου το μαύρο/ έχει τριφτεί και δεν αντέχει/ αναζητάς ψηλαφητά τη λόγχη / την ορισμένη να τρυπήσει την καρδιά σου/ για να την ανοίξει στο φως"(Δ') is granted by the blade of the redeemer, saviour, godsent, murderer, Manolis to Alex, Alan and Mina, and gives them the ultimate pleasure, the light.

No one, however, knows about the murderer, as in "Επί Σκηνής"(Ε') "ένοχος δεν υπάρχει, καπνός". No one can recognise him, no one cares, "κατάργησαν τα μάτια τους τυφλοί./ Μάρτυρες δεν υπάρχουν πια για τίποτε", though Manolis ironically suggests to his

commander that perhaps it is a "passerby" who is the murderer (139).

Louka feels that Manolis is the last link in a chain of secrets(123) that are about to be disclosed as in the revealing verb "απο-καλύπτω", and he himself feels part of something 'beyond'. In his favourite place, a clearing on the mountain, he feels that nature recognizes him, dreams of hieratic waves(126) and experiences a fear of cosmic proportions, as sounds out of this world come after him. Losing all fear of dying, he realises that he is going to disappear in a divine vision, becoming part of a cosmogony: he feels he is the chosen, to be devoured by the 'wave' and thereby saved. He is in love with the Virgin, he makes love to her picture and commits an act that goes beyond the ultimate sin: as an Antichrist, he violates the symbol of eternal purity, whilst committing incest at the same time. In the clearing, "ξέφωτο", where he throws up, the earth devours his vomit and the rain begins to fall as part of the cosmic cycle that assigned him his role in the beginning. He hopes to see a vision, to hear a voice, his agony equals the agony of Jesus on the Mount of Olives and on the cross, as expressed in "Επί Σκηνής" (ΣΤ') "πότε θα ξαναμιλήσεις;". However, he falls asleep realizing he is an "instrument"(143), knowing that there will be other times, more violent, more complete "τη στιγμή που θάρθει/εδώ σ' αυτό το θέατρο το φως" (Επί Σκηνής, ΣΤ').

The heat then starts to torment the island. The place is full of black rubbish bags which almost feed off the heat and become

alive. Manolis is determined: "Εγώ θα τα μαζέψω. Εγώ θα καθαρίσω το νησί, τον κόσμο. Αν δεν τα καθαρίσω εγώ, ποιός θα το κάνει;"(153). He throws the bags into the sea as Mark calmly makes a painting of them, and declares that Manolis is there to impose order, whereas he himself, assuming the role of the apostle John, is there to "register it"(154). In this very same setting, Manolis talks directly to God for the first time : "μαζεύω αυτά που μαζεύονται. Μήπως είμαι ευλογημένος;[...]Δεν θα καταλάβω ποτέ την άπειρη διαστροφή σου. Οι φόνοι και τώρα αυτό. Γιατί διάλεξες εμένα[...]εγώ τίποτα δεν καταλαβαίνω διάλεξες κάποιον που τον ξεπερνάνε πάντα οι σκοποί σου, που τους εκτελεί τυφλά, μέσα στην άγνοια. Πρέπει να είναι μέρος της πλεκτάνης σου"(155-156). The way Manolis talks in this excerpt "παραμιλούσε, έλεγε φράσεις ασυνάρτητες, ασύνδετες"(155) is similar to the way the prologue of the 'Μεταγραφή' describes a prophet speaking: "ο λόγος του, ακατάστατος, σπασμωδικός, αινιγματικός...γιατί αρπάζεται, αναγκάζεται από τον Θεό, χωρίς ο ίδιος να το θέλει" (11). And Mark kneels and embraces his legs, as John embraces the legs of the Angel (*Apocalypse* 18:10). The truth has been revealed to him and he comes to terms with his 'mission': "Έτσι είναι το σωστό, εσύ να μην το ξέρεις. Αλλά εγώ πώς δεν το κατάλαβα Τα σημάδια ήταν εκεί από την αρχή. Τα σημάδια ήταν πάνω σου. Γι' αυτό τελείωσα και το πορτραίτο σου. *Επρεπε να δώσω ένα πρόσωπο σ' αυτόν που δεν έχει όνομα*"(156, my italics).

On the day of the Dormition of the Virgin, which is one of the grandest feasts of Christianity, everything seems to melt under the heat. It is the eve of the longest day in which, as

Seferis says, a "κατακλυσμός της ζωής" (Summer Solstice A') will take place.

The mules bolt and run over the people, whilst the rubbish becomes red with blood. The mules are transformed into horses as in Summer Solstice A': "τ' άλογα.../καλπάζουν και ιδρώνουν/πάνω σε σκόρπια κορμιά". The horses tear away pieces of human flesh and rubbish, human flesh and rubbish become one with every gallop (164), and from the lack of water the frenzy becomes greater and greater, resulting in limbs thrown into the air(163) as in Summer Solstice Δ': "στο τρελλό ανεμοσκόρπισμα /δεξιά ζερβά πάνω και κάτω/στροβιλίζονται σαρίδια..../λύνουν τα μέλη των ανθρώπων/οι ψυχές/βιάζονται ν' αποχωριστούν το σώμα/διψούν και δεν βρίσκουν νερό πουθενά". When night falls in *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, nothing can be seen, but the smells begin to become inexorable(164) as in Summer Solstice Ε': "...θα χορτάσουν όσοι αγαπούν τα μυρωδικά".

It is the point where "ο κόσμος δεν έχει τίποτα άλλο να προσφέρει παρά τούτο το τέρμα" (Summer Solstice Ε'). It is the moment of the apocalyptic crisis in the biblical sense, and it is written in such a style: Manolis the murderer-redeemer sees visions of bending wheat, countless suns in the sky, fish coming out of the sea to walk on land, the sea ebbing away. Not only are these images absent from the Biblical Apocalypse, but they serve a different purpose, reversing the dramatic action. Manolis is angered by these visions: he breaks up the church and feels for his knife, ready to murder God if he were there, stealing the icon of the Virgin before running away. What can be seen here in Manolis'

rebellion is that the light in the narrative becomes deadly with a fearful finality, preparing the narrative's own apocalypse.

Just as in Seferis' 'Μνήμη Α'(1974), in the imminence of an apocalyptic "ανάσταση"(21) the narrator does not feel like playing his flute "κι έστριψα στο περβόλι μου κι έσκαψα κι έθαψα το καλάμι", in *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, Louka by now finishes her book and buries it in her garden on a day when the sun is "ασυνήθιστα δυνατός, πió κοντινός"(171); this is metaphorically the longest day of the year. In the last chapter of the book, the heat is unbearable; it is "a beast"(176) that they try to keep behind closed doors. There are no smells or colours, the sun appearing to have ironically purified the surroundings by erasing everything.

However, it seems as if the sun erases itself as well. The plate of the sun is whitened, as if its blood has been evaporated by its own heat. The purification that the sun has previously offered becomes a stability. Nothing changes and the heat grows stronger, with the sunshine becoming deadly(175) as if everything "γυρεύει να περάσει από το θάνατο για να 'βρει τη χαρά" (Summer Solstice IB') as "το φως είναι σφυγμός/ολόένα και πió αργός/θαρρείς πως πάει να σταματήσει" (Summer Solstice IB'), "λίγο ακόμα και θα σταματήσει ο ήλιος" (Summer Solstice IΓ'). Everything is bleached white, and as the sun sends vibrations of heat vertically upon the island all the animals leave their natural habitat in the hope of salvation.

Finally the sun becomes immobile(179), and the heat rises beyond the temperature of fire, so that the people feel an "αναστάσιμη ωδίνη" (Summer Solstice ΙΓ').

Placido, who used to make masks that resembled Manolis, looks directly into the sun and burns his eyes. He feels no pain, he is relieved, he was never so "γαλήνιος"(179), so placid, so true to the connotations of his name.

Mark understands that the cycle is coming to an end. Under this brightness the world is becoming dark and mysterious again and he informs the police about Manolis.

Meanwhile everyone is suffering from dehydration (a pun on the island Hydra). The icon that Manolis had buried in the clearing has been blinded and deformed by the heat as the solid paint melts, altering the Virgin's facial features with the speed of a nightmare, in a desperate attempt to find something humid.

Mark then goes to the edge of a precipice and cries and drinks his tears, again in an attempt to assuage his thirst, feeling that the time of Manolis has passed. He feels ready then for his own "αναστάσιμη ωδίνη" and he looks right into the sun, saying "επιτέλους" (185) and feeling relieved in the same way that Seferis writes "ό,τι πέρασε πέρασε σωστά" (Summer Solstice ΙΔ').

Louka, throughout the narrative, is engaged in an agonizing process of writing, but she merely stares at the white paper, a mirror in which she can only see her own face (14), which is a

direct allusion to Summer Solstice H': "Τ' άσπρο χαρτί σκληρός καθρέφτης/επιστρέφει μόνο εκείνο που ήσουν/[...]Ζωή σου είναι ό,τι έδωσες/τούτο το κενό είναι ό,τι έδωσες/το άσπρο χαρτί". Seferis in the excerpt, meditates, as Beaton argues, on the poet's task of attaining the ultimate "word", which will link the basis of poetry (the linguistic unit) "with human reason and the creation of the real world"(1987:147). An unattainable goal, because Seferis is forced to concede that the process of attaining "the word" is ultimately futile and can never be achieved.

Louka, exposed to Manolis' "light", follows the advice that Summer Solstice B' gives, "μη σπαταλάς την πνοή που σου χάρισε/τούτη η ανάσα", and overcomes the difficulty by writing frantically until she completes her book: she is thus absent from the overall narrative action, not wishing to waste a single portion of the "creative breath" that has been vouchsafed to her. In her compulsion to rush her writing, to have it completed in time, she uses the phrases "δεν μένει πια πολύς καιρός", or "πρέπει να κάνω γρήγορα"(133); a fact that serves to show once more the amplification of apocalyptic transpositional elements in *Ο Υπνοβάτης*.⁵

⁵Although of peripheral importance in discussing the intertextual relation of *Ο Υπνοβάτης* to the Apocalypse, one should not fail to note the consistent sustaining of the numerical apocalyptic symbolism throughout the narrative. God's dream lasts seven days(9); Mark drinks seven glasses of vodka every day(11); Louka is without electricity for three days(13); Ron plans ahead for three years(16); Maggie uses three cookery books(16); Anezoula is having massage for three

2. 4. The revelation of the *Précis de Décomposition*

Although in the present discussion of *Ο Υπνοβάτης* I have dealt with the three main characters (Manolis, Louka and Mark), a brief comment has been made about Placido, whom the text draws from all the other minor characters of the narrative through his relationship to Alfredo, and who "gave" himself to the sun, but in a totally different way from that of Mark.

Placido had been trying to finish a mask for months, but its faceless countenance was never completed, in contrast to Mark who completed his painting through Manolis. Even though the mask's resemblance to Manolis is made obvious to the reader through the fact that although Placido never sees it as depicting him, it nevertheless reminds him of someone he knows and thus he sticks a Camel cigarette in its mouth, of course the only character in the narrative who smokes 'Camels' is Manolis(135). Ron, Placido's long-time lover, leaves him and sends him another man, Alfredo, as a substitute gift. On Placido's terrace, Alfredo plays a composition on his guitar, which he calls 'The Apocalypse in D major'(113). Placido feels that this preposterous act turns

months(23); there are seven guests for dinner at Maggie's(17); noon is always referred to as three o'clock(144); Manolis puts gardenias on the numbers three and seven of his telephone dial(100); three people are murdered; Mina dies on the seventh strike of the church bell; the narrative spans seven months; and Alfredo counts to seven, turning his guitar round seven times(113).

his favourite book into a grotesque farce, because on the one hand, Alfredo totally defies the sanctity of the *Apocalypse*, with its "too many monsters and trumpets for his taste", and on the other, he values Cioran's *Précis de Décomposition*⁶, as the ultimate book, a book which he is constantly reading. Finally Alfredo succumbs to a mysterious disease which is described as "την αρρώστια των θεών, την αριστοκρατική και την εκλεπτυσμένη, την εξαίσια άγνωστη"(119). He is deported and before he dies in Zurich, he sends Cioran's book to Placido along with a letter which partly is a direct quote from the Apocalypse (I' 10):

και το πήρα το βιβλιάριο από το χέρι του αγγέλου και το έφαγα, και ήταν στο στόμα μου γλυκό σαν μέλι. Όταν όμως το κατάπια, τα σωθικά μου γέμισαν πίκρα· Αγαπητέ Placido, όταν λάβεις αυτό το βιβλίο θάναι πιά πραγματικά «από το χέρι του αγγέλου», ο άγγελος θάμαι εγώ. Διάβασέ το. Τώρα αν τα σωθικά σου γεμίσουν πίκρα αμφιβάλλω, γιατί νομίζω πως δεν έχεις σωθικά καθόλου. Μιά κατάρα λοιπόν από το υπερπέραν, αλλά με καλούς σκοπούς(121).

As Alfredo's musical composition is in fact a 'decomposition' of the *Apocalypse*, his letter offers Placido an ironic revelation -from a man who is already dead- of the value and permanence of death. In an inversion of the symbolic status of the apocalyptic, the 'revelation' made to Placido is that the important issue is exactly what is discussed in the *Précis de*

⁶*Précis de Décomposition* was published in Paris by Editions Gallimard in 1949. It is the first book that the Rumanian philosopher E.M.Cioran wrote in French. It was translated in Greek by Kostis Papagiorgis, and was published in Athens by Exandas in 1988 under the title *Εγκόλπιο Ανασκοπισμού*.

Décomposition. Everything must necessarily decompose into nothing; after nothing, and before nothing, nothing exists.

E.M. Cioran in his *Précis De Décomposition*(1949), through a cynical and sarcastic discourse, proclaims the futility of all action, denounces religion as a terrorist strategy, and argues for the annihilation of the self through total indifference and uselessness. He calls for a negation of all the values of Western civilization, which he calls "les excès suscités par la déesse Raison"(10), and through which "le monde finit par accepter n'importe quelle révélation et se résigne à n'importe quel frisson, pourvu que la formule en ait été trouvée"(68). He finally argues for a state of being in which individuals would stand in the universe waiting to die, without upholding any convictions whatsoever, both about themselves in particular and for the world in general.

Cioran says that only death is important because there are no metaphysical mysteries, proclaiming that "il n'y a d'initiation qu'au néant - et au ridicule d'être vivant"(23) for change can come only through death: "tout ce qui préfigure la mort ajoute une qualité de nouveauté à la vie, la modifie et l'amplifie"(21). Alfredo, who was constantly reading Cioran's book, became sick. Cioran values sickness highly, saying that "la maladie est une activité, la plus intense qu'un homme puisse déployer, un mouvement frénétique et[...] stationnaire, la plus riche dépense d'énergie *sans geste*, l'attente hostile et passionnée d'une fulguration irréparable"(21) and adding that "les grands

souffrants ne s' ennuiant jamais"(25). It takes Alfredo to appear as a ghost in front of Placido, for him to realise that "ο Αλφρέδος είχε έρθει στο νησί γιά να πεθάνει[...] και για να τον κάνει να κοιτάξει τον ήλιο"(179) that burned his eyes "απότομα και αποτελεσματικά"(178) and condemned him to total darkness, never having recognized the mission of the godsent Manolis.

It is in the darkness of Alfredo, as the epitome of the Cioranic hero, that Placido is able to shed all fears generated by the metaphysical beliefs, desires and incitements, which had troubled him since childhood. Alfredo's metaphorical suicide, therefore, becomes a Cioranian "se supprimer"(39) for Placido. This self-effacement brings about total nothingness that has a power greater than all other absolutes, even greater than the Christian Apocalyptic eternity that denounces suicide as a sin, because as Cioran argues "si les religions nous ont défendu de mourir par nous-mêmes, c' est qu' elles y voyaient un exemple d' insoumission qui humiliait les temples et les dieux"(58). Cioran does not only argue for the end of the self, but also for the end of the universe through total inaction. The intertextual link to the end of the narrative in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* is extremely close; Cioran's text negates the Apocalyptic message and subverts the Heraclitean axiom of regularity in natural change, by wondering "si les après-midi dominicales étaient prolongées pendant des mois, où aboutirait l' humanité, émancipée de la sueur, libre du poids de la première malédiction?[...] *L' univers transformé en après-midi de dimanche...*, c' est la définition de l' ennui - et la fin de l' univers"(37), that goes against the utopia prophesied by

the apocalyptic vision "d' un univers *natal*, où l' on se repose de soi-même, un univers, - oreiller cosmique de toutes nos fatigues"(51).

Even though Manolis is God's instrument for revenge, he develops a will of his own. He oversteps the New Law which he was supposed to enforce and allows two exceptions, Louka and Mark, to have his blessing. They both 'recognise' him, and through his upsetting secular light of divine origin, they fulfil their creativity and achieve their purpose in a doomed time, before however the final end comes to subvert the Logos through the immobile sun, in which, as Cioran says, "nous rivalisons avec les dieux, [...] nos fièvres triomphent de nos effrois, [et avant] une température tellement élevée [...] nous achèverait en quelques jours"(79).

For Heraclitus, St John, and Seferis, Logos is the underlying principle of the universe, that which controls and directs the balance in the process of change. In *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, however, the Logos -the New Law- is intertextually 'deformed' or transformed into something completely different. It is a means of revenge, distant from the principle of stability and order, and is a command for disorder, to punish the disobedience which enraged the text's God.

Yet I strongly believe that the sun's overstepping its measure in the last chapter of *Ο Υπνοβάτης* points beyond the wish of such a petty fictional God. The fixed sun is not put forward as a substitute for God, but as a negation of His

position, almost as if defined by Cioran "toute aspiration arbitraire et fantasque étant préférable aux vérités inflexibles"(56). Such a sun is a Non-Logos and Law of the extreme. It is the ultimate destructive power, it is "la dernière des créatures, la vraie mort n' étant pas la pourriture, mais le dégoût de toute irradiation"(74), and thus it becomes omnipotent, desirable and magnetic as people willingly give themselves to it. The sun's immobility in *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, making up the very last sentence of the book, "και στον ουρανό έλαμπε ακίνητος ο ήλιος", is the most abnormal and unnatural demonstration of nature, it is the end of the self, and the end of "cette terre -péché du Créateur!"(Cioran 1949:86). The immobile sun marks the Cioranic "géographie du Rien"(86), as well as marking "l' instant sans fin et sans désir, [...] cette vacance primordiale, insensible aux pressentiments des chutes et de la vie"(86) in which, the individual can be permanently free and "ayant perdu le respect religieux que nous portons malgré nous à nos dernières illusions, il se jouerait de son coeur et du soleil..."(75).

The event most feared by Heraclitus becomes a paradigm for the most enviable existence. The characters are given a chance to stand clear of the regularity of the universe and observe its decaying truth, a chance to be free from any kind of moderating Logos and Law. This is a chance that not only Mark and Louka take, but the island itself: "το νησί δεν φοβότανε πιά. Αφέθηκε στον ήλιο, ανοίχτηκε σαν σώμα. Κανείς πια δεν θα το κούραζε, δεν θα το πλήγωνε με το βήμα του ή τη σκέψη του[...] το νησί ποτέ δεν ήταν τόσο ωραίο"(185).

2. 5. Intertextual Sleepwalking

The striking absence of human life in the last paragraph of *Ο Υπνοβάτης* (even though the results of human activities are there), along with the inconclusive temporality, provided by the imperfect tense of the last sentence -έλαμπε- result in an open-ended narration. This inherent ambiguity relates very cleverly to the title of the book, as a sleepwalker is considered to be mobile whilst asleep, an activity which leads to inexorable frustration when realized. Manolis gives an explicit account of sleepwalking, which, in its effect, is very much like the use of the imperfect tense in contributing to the open ending of the text:

καμιά φορά[...]αισθάνομαι πως το νησί ολόκληρο είναι ένα όνειρο[...]προσπαθούμε να καταλάβουμε το νόημά του αλλά δεν μπορούμε, γιατί είμαστε μέρος αυτού του ονείρου, ίσως μάλιστα και οι πρωταγωνιστές. Ίσως ακόμα, σαν υπνοβάτες, να περπατάμε σ' ένα νησί ανύπαρκτο, να ονειρευόμαστε εμείς ένα νησί ανύπαρκτο, να βλέπουμε όλοι την ίδια στιγμή το ίδιο όνειρο[...]Άλλες φορές, αισθάνομαι εγώ στο κέντρο ενός ονείρου που φωτίζει, κατευθύνει τον κόσμο. Αισθάνομαι πως το νησί είναι αυτό το όνειρο, κι εγώ ο εκτελεστής του(127).

Returning to the intertextual processes suggested in section 2. 3, one can see that Seferis is very preoccupied with waking up from a harmful sleep. In *Μυθιστόρημα* where sleep wraps one like a tree, the narrator implores "Δώσε μας, έξω από τον ύπνο, τη γαλήνη"(IE'), just as in "On a Ray of Winter Sun" (Δ'), even though one rests comfortably upon the broad shoulders of sleep, one must seek the light constantly. Moreover, in "Summer Solstice"

(Γ') one's dream becomes a burden in this kind of sleep, so one must force oneself out of that sleep, however difficult, as the irony in Seferis' poem suggests through the wish that this sleep would fall around the ankles like a robe (ΣΤ').

The idea of sleep as a negative state of being comes from Heraclitus, who believed that in sleep we lose every memory, power and strand of wisdom because we are at a distance from the Divine Law, whereas, awake, we are cognate beings by inhaling the Divine Law (Kirk & Raven 1957:207)⁷. The danger of being caught asleep and the importance of being awake, as expressed by Luke's words, "blessed are the servants whom the master finds awake when he comes" (12:36-37), is related to a parable which states that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming he would have been awake and would not have allowed his house to be broken into (Luke 12:39); this is even present in the 'Revelation of John': "μακάριος ὁ γρηγορῶν" (16:15) as proof of faith in the light of God and readiness to receive it.

⁷Kirk and Raven also comment on Heraclitus' idea that 'sleepers are workers' (1957:208) which C. Kahn quotes in full as delivered by Marcus Aurelius: "Heraclitus says, I think, that men asleep are laborers and co-workers in what takes place in the world" (1979:216). Although this fragment suggests that man is never completely 'out of touch' with reason, even when asleep, Marcus Aurelius' accuracy is disputed by Kahn, who considers the fragment a free paraphrase of some statement otherwise lost.

This thought, when transposed into the text of *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, points towards the initial fear of God that he created earth when asleep, in a dream which came true by accident; an idea that makes earth an "unwise" product, distant from the principles of the universal Logos, and makes the subversiveness of the rest of the narrative possible.

'The sleepwalker' as a title comes into intertextual play with Arthur Koestler's *The Sleepwalkers* and Hermann Broch's trilogy of that name, and through its connection with the apocalyptic necessity of being awake, renders them intertexts to Seferis' 'Three Secret Poems', and leads to an infinite expansion of the intertextual network⁸ into other apocalyptic narratives, as presented in Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*.

Koestler, in *The Sleepwalkers* (1959), offers a history of cosmology, that is, of man's changing vision of the universe which encloses him, discussing several philosophers' efforts to explain natural phenomena, and especially those that resulted in inexplicable visions, as for example solar eclipses. He argues that "the manner in which some of the most important individual discoveries were arrived at reminds one more of a sleepwalker's performance than an electronic brain's"(15), because in the face of events that seemed "like those in a dream, both real and not; inside his box or womb the dreamer felt fairly safe"(20). He goes

⁸ 'Intertextuality' is here to be understood in the sense outlined earlier in this chapter, section 2. 1.

on to say that the philosophers' "collective obsessions and controlled schizophrenias"(15) were never free from metaphysical bias of one kind or another, and that in fact always resulted in their being attributable to a substance without definite properties, but surely indestructible and everlasting: God, as the "Unmoved Mover, who spins the world round from outside it" (Koestler,1959:59), and who, as Cioran would argue, is designed by humans to be responsible for the regularity of the sun's movement, and other repetitious illusions of all "les vulgarités du renouveau"(225).

As far as Broch's trilogy *The Sleepwalkers*⁹ is concerned, the intertextual promenade is multiply expanded. The overall subject of the trilogy is the decline and fall of everything that matters, or better, as the subtitle of the epilogue suggests, the "Disintegration of values" which, in turn, suggests Alfredo's favourite book, Cioran's *Précis De Décomposition*, in Karapanou's *Ο Υπνοβάτης*. Moreover, there is another intertextual link to be made, as the main character of each book in the trilogy is connected to Manolis in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* in his own right: Pasenow's attachment to military values and his obsession with order and his uniform, along with Esch's mania with bookkeeping practices and Huguenau's deceptive posing as the agent of an imaginary conglomerate, assume cosmic dimensions in the same way that

⁹ The titles of the three volumes in Broch's trilogy, which was written between 1928 and 1931 in Vienna, are: '1888: Pasenow the Romantic', '1903: Esch the Anarchist' and '1918: Huguenau the realist'

Manolis' preoccupation with his uniform, order, and his role as policeman did. As these obsessions become roles and part of a private theology, a sacrifice, a suffering of sorts, is posited for each of these characters as a fixation of redemption. This involves violent sexual practices and murders performed as religious rites (again), as part of a desire to blend with a cosmic order.

In the trilogy, a sort of covert, almost unconscious, revolution exerts itself and passes through anarchy to total freedom with the outbreak of the irrational. Since the rational is related to the state of being awake, sleepwalking becomes the locus for the exercising of the irrational, and freedom represents the domain of the non-rational, where there is a release from the boundaries and restrictions of the value-systems state.

The irrational/non-rational impulses in Broch's texts are the result of an eruption caused by the disintegration of the social and religious dogmas of a world which is unable to put forward the omnireference of a central and binding value, that is, of a world in crisis. These irrational acts and desires are asserted at all costs, or, better, at no recognisable cost, since they are independent of social systems. As these value-free impulses cannot be counter-referred to any central authority, however, they result in the loneliness of the "I", and become part of a personal metaphysics which is a makeshift solution to structure the personal universe in which each act stands by

itself and relates only to itself and the "I" that initiated it. The 'I' put forth by Broch is in complete opposition to Cioran's 'non-I', that comes to the individual who "émancipé de ce qu' il a vécu, incurieux de ce qu' il vivra, il [...] s' arrache aux repères de tous les temps [...] heureux de tourner sa dernière haine contre soi"(92). In contrast, the loneliness of the "I" in the non-rationality of the non-order is so unbearable for humans, according to Broch, that one has "the desire that someone should come to pay the debt of sacrificial death and redeem the world to a new innocence"(296). This irrational freedom of the "I", which is due to the world in crisis and the disintegration of values, will come to an end, Broch says apocalyptically, through

the breath of the Absolute that sweeps across the world, [...]the oneness of all men[...] beyond all Space and all Time; the oneness in which all light has its source and from which spring the healing of all living things[...] rising in the insurrection of the irrational[...]there sounds the voice that binds all that has been to all that is to come[...]and it is not the voice of dread and doom; it falters in the silence of the Logos and yet is borne on by it[...]the voice of comfort and hope and immediate love: "Do thyself no harm! for we are all here! (1986:648)

Despite the fact that, as Cioran argues, "nulle critique de nulle raison ne réveillera l' homme de son «sommeil dogmatique»"(89), the apocalyptic prophecy and promise finally remains true, albeit unattainable at present, for Seferis and Broch alike, because of their fundamental belief in Logos and the evershining light which will enable the sleepwalkers to wake up

and 'inhale the divine law' in the future. As Cioran says in the *Précis*, however, the nostalgia for a lost original order "n' est qu' une théologie sentimentale, où l' Absolu est construit avec les éléments du désir, où Dieu est l' Indéterminé élaboré par la longueur"(51) and therefore, he continues, living in a perpetual expectancy of a final recovery "vivre dans l' attente, dans ce qui n' est pas encore, c' est accepter le déséquilibre stimulant que suppose l' idée d' avenir. [...] Pour échapper à la stérilité, il faut s' épanouir au seuil de la raison..."(49): this is the idea that is carried forth through sleepwalking in Karapanou's novel.

Sleepwalking, in *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, remains the desirable state of being. As a non-conscious activity, which occurs in a dream-like state, in which desires and fears are not bound by socially imposed restrictions, it becomes a venture into the multiple possibilities of the unknown. The dream-like security of sleepwalking allows the enactment of desires and fantasies forbidden by the rational structure of existing value systems. It is a state of openness in which no inhibition can restrict actions; it is an unbound value-free anarchic force which, due to its non rationality, can never become the basis for a new integration of values.

In much the same way, the non-principles of sleepwalking, metaphorically transposed into the concept of intertextuality, turn the transgression of norms that is accomplished in sleepwalking into a redeeming signifier for an infinite intertextual promenade, one that does not recognise and indeed

breaks up the traditional notions of authenticity, originality, priority, singularity, uniqueness and autonomy, since one cannot demand of the intertextual sleepwalker what she/he is not capable of fulfilling: that is, conscious and deliberate efforts to establish or prove the concepts of unity and continuity, as reflected in Bloom's notion of creation as a tale of the Fall in permanence.

CHAPTER 3

Ο ΒΙΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΙΣΜΑΗΛ ΦΕΡΙΚ ΠΑΣΑ : FATHERED BY HISTORY

Ο Υπνοβάτης subverted the notion of the light of God as the single origin, as the transcendental arché, the founding principle that controls, governs and regulates the universe as the source of truth and absolute purity. When at the end of Karapanou's text the sun stops, and its light becomes permanent, the ultimate message of the Apocalypse is subverted; the eternal divine harmony of the universe, exemplified by the inviolable order of the cycle in natural change, as expressed by the Heraclitean axiom -"the sun shall not overstep his measure; otherwise the Erinyes, hand-maidens of justice, will hunt him down"- is replaced by an inconclusive state of a disorder so powerful it can, in its own right, be defined as divine, and therefore as the new site of absolute truth. Because this site of new intertextual truth is so disorderly and multiple, it goes against all notions of originality, purity and authenticity, and subverts the idea of the Origin and, consequently, the idea of the Fall as well.

This chapter will explore the way in which the novel *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* by Rea Galanaki (1989)¹ subverts the

¹Rea Galanaki was born in Herakleion in 1947 and has published three collections of poems: *Πλην εύχαρις* (1975), *Ορυκτά* (1979) and *Το Κέικ* (1980). Her prose work includes *Πού ζεί ο λύκος* (1982a), *Ομόκεντρα διηγήματα* (1986)

traditional notions of the individual and its relationship to the discourse of history through a feminist critique that puts forward a concept of a gendered subjectivity. This subjectivity is revealed by the novel, it will be argued, as an effect of historical discourse, which seeks to annihilate contradictions in order to feed the uniformity of the 'objective' categories on which this discourse depends.

Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά, as a text about a fallen man's quest for redemption through acquiring the "έσχατη γνώση"(197) of what lies beyond history, expands the intertextual web of *Ο Υπνοβάτης* by subverting the notion of a pure existence, as suggested by the archetypes that lie at the beginning of the line of the blood of the father which must coincide with the end of *nostos*. Thus, appropriating Heraclitus' axiom for the purpose of this analysis, one could argue that as far as Galanaki's novel is concerned, the subversion focuses on the axiom that "the son shall not overstep the father's measure; otherwise the Erinyes, hand-maidens of justice, will hunt him down".

Whereas in *Ο Υπνοβάτης* the apocalyptic message given under divine direction is that in times of conflict, salvation and a peaceful future are promised only to those who choose to live by,

and *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* which is her first novel, already in its 4th edition. She has written numerous articles in literary magazines and has also translated *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas.

and have faith in the light of God, is subverted through Manolis, who comes as the instrument of the divine order and in the end creates an infinite disorder, in *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά* the disruption is taken a step further by being focused on the individual and its relation to history: the hero and main character Ismail, in the end, with his duality and under his Christian name Emmanuel, becomes the site of disorder and undermines the purity of the mysticism of the centre that lies at the heart of *nostos*.

Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά is at first sight a kind of historical novel, a fictional biography of a historical character, a blend of historical truth and fiction as suggested by the 'Σημείωση' that precedes the actual text. This note, written with the detachment and factuality of perfect historical discourse, implies a difference between history and fiction, between reality and imagination, by contrasting the historically available information concerning "υπαρκτά πρόσωπα, πηγές, ιστορική έρευνα, προφορική παράδοση" to the personality of Ismail Ferik Pasha, which falls into what history has not reported. The personality of the fictionalized, yet historical, Ismail Ferik Pasha must be considered (φανταστική) fictive. In consequence, by juxtaposing Ismail's historical life to his fictive personality, the juxtaposition carries through to a distinction between the public and the personal, the historical and the fictional. Thus, as will be shown later in this chapter, Galanaki's novel is a fictional life-story which aims not to reconstruct history but to expose the way in which the public recording of the past attempts to

annihilate any contradictions that may develop within the individual by referring them to the unbroken unity and continuity of the language of "omniscient" historical discourse, such as is echoed in the 'Σημείωση'.

It is precisely the emphasis that Galanaki's novel places on language which serves to differentiate this narrative from the generic traditions of the historical novel. The use of language plays an important dual role in *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά*. First, the language of the narrative, which can, quite accurately, be described as poetic, celebrates the fictionality of the text and further distances it from the omniscience of historical discourse.

Secondly, in Galanaki's novel the concept of "language" is used as an integral part of the process of the individual's communication with the past, not so much only in terms of acquiring factual information, but mostly in terms of how the "language" of the past, which is accessible only through texts, delineates specific roles that the individual should occupy in relation to particular historical events. In that sense Galanaki's novel can be defined as what Linda Hutcheon calls 'historiographic metafiction'(1988), that is, a text that recognizes the importance of the past, but also acknowledges that the "reality" of the past is accessible only through its textualized remains. As a "historiographic metafiction" *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* subverts the primacy and guarantee of the properties of the past. At the same time, however, by making the

past part of its fiction, the text opens it up to the present and prevents it from being conclusive and teleological.

Furthermore, the "historiographic metafiction" of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* may in addition be seen as subverting the discourse of nationalism for which the historical novel has often been used as a vehicle. Instead of using history as a text that conveys the archetypal laws of the *genos* in order to bring forward a fiction which portrays the ancestors as an example for the essence of the nationalist identity of the contemporary Greek/Cretan individual, Galanaki uses in her fiction the historical events of 1866 as a pretext to open up to the present the life story of the historical Ismail Ferik Pasha as a means of exploring an analogue for a contemporary version of the individual, not as a monosemantic entity defined by nationalistic classifications, but as a site of contradiction.

The depiction of the fictive personality of a historical individual as the site of contradiction, can already be mapped out by a summary of the basic story: a young boy, probably named Emmanuel, who, separated from his brother Andonis Kambanis Papadakis during the Cretan uprising of the 1820s, is captured by the Egyptian army, changes name and religion, becomes a general and a minister of war and returns to Crete almost fifty years later as Ismail Ferik Pasha, to crush the revolution that his brother is organizing and funding from Athens; he dies on the island, but his body is buried in Egypt.

The search for unity is constantly frustrated, both in terms of the narrative and in terms of the story and its protagonist, despite the fact that both protagonist and narrative return to their 'origins', Ismail's place of birth and third person mode of narration respectively. The narrative is divided into three parts, each corresponding to a set of contradictions in the development of the personality of its protagonist. The first part, written in the third person, is called "Χρόνια της Αιγύπτου. Ο Μύθος". The second, written in the first person, is called "Ημέρες Νόστου και Ιστορίας", and the last part, written again in the third person, is called "Επιμύθιο". The first part, which spans almost fifty years, deals with the events of the capture and Islamization of Ismail until just before his return to Crete. The third-person narration creates an illusion of omniscience with regard to this part of Ismael's life, even though it is mostly fictional, in the sense that, as the note made clear, there is not much information in the historical records available on Ismail Ferik Pasha, except for the period of the Cretan revolution, 1866 to 1868.

The second part, the days of *nostos* and history, span a period of nine months on the island of Crete. The events in these days of *nostos*, because Ismail is coming back to his homeland, and history, because of the Cretan revolution, take on an eyewitness account, where the individual experience (narrated in the first person) becomes a source of public history. It is Ismail's account of what happened, his own fictional narration of the historical events, a monologue in which the "realistic"

accounts of battles and negotiations are interspersed with expressions of his feelings and his point of view, whereas in the third part 'Επιμύθιο', the third-person narration returns to account for the different versions of Ismail Ferik Pasha's death and the events after it.

The shifting point of view of the narrative, which moves from the limited personal first person to the omniscient third person, assisted by Rea Galanaki's poetic discourse, results in the construction of a multiple fictional reality, which, as G. Thalassis observes, is present even in the title: "Παράλληλα στον τίτλο συνυπάρχουν τρεις πολιτισμικές περιοχές: Ο Ελληνισμός και η Ορθοδοξία στη λέξη βίος (πρβλ. Βίος και Πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά, βίοι αγίων), η Ανατολή στο όνομα Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά και η Δύση στον υπότιτλο *Spina nel Cuore*. Οι τρεις αυτοί χώροι υποδηλώνουν και τρεις διαφορετικές οπτικές γωνίες, με τις ανάλογες ιδεολογίες, τους εθνικισμούς και τις διεκδικήσεις."(1991: 100). Although *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* seems at first to inscribe a clear distinction of differences *between* modes of narration, kinds of ideology, gender and personality traits, in the end it subverts their monosemantic dominance by recontextualizing them as differences *within* the text about Ismail Ferik Pasha's life story, as well as *within* Ismail Ferik Pasha's historical but fictionalized personality².

²As regards the subversion of gender in *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά*, and as far as the engendering of the subject in women's writing is concerned, Karen Van Dyck(1990) has mapped out a shift from Galanaki's latest collection of poems, *Το Κέικ* (1980), in terms of the text's undermining of fixed gender roles as well as in

The result challenges the illusion of unity both of the narrative and the individual as the origin of truth and purity.

The rest of this chapter will be divided into sections in terms of the demands which specific events of public history make upon the private life of the historical yet fictionalized Ismail. Thus, after setting the historical stage in which Ismail's duality is established (section 3.1), the analysis will demonstrate how the main character's future role is born and delineated by the history of his family and his *genos* (section 3.2). Then, the relationship between fathers and sons will be explored (section 3.3), as regards both Ismail and other characters in Galanaki's text alongside the novel *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie (1982). The inescapable burden of the paternal demand will then be exemplified by a juxtaposition of Ismail's and Andonis' perceptions of filial duty (section 3.4). Having established that Ismail's *nostos* is an inexorable (paternal) imperative, the analysis will show (section 3.5) how this concept is connected to specific historical events (as Ismail's duality is) and in the next section (3.6), the metaphorical dimension of the demand that made Ismail's life come full circle will be questioned. The penultimate section (3.7) will discuss the wider intertextual implications of the association between a successful *nostos* and death, whereas the

terms of its questioning the appropriateness of the mimetic model for women's writing.

last section will show how the narrative questions the monosemantic relation of the individual to history through the subversion of the pair *nostos-thanatos*.

3. 1. Setting the stage

Communication with one's past, with one's origins, is a way to put some order into the chaos of living in the contradictions of the present. The means to achieve that communication are myths and historical records which, in a sense, both provide one with some sort of truth. As R. Beaton (1991) has argued, 'myth' among other things "came to mean a story which is not literally true but which nonetheless exemplifies a true state of affairs"(43), providing "a common background of belief shared by all members of a society, such as Homer's epics used to provide for the ancient Greeks and the Bible for Christian societies[...]a common denominator of experience intelligible to all"(44). Based on the traditional belief of historical enquiry that there are objects out there in a real and single past, whose truth can be objectively known in the present, historical events as well as myths, are, therefore, invoked as an ultimate resource of reality, a central truth that forms the basis and unifies the understanding of anything human, creating a historical meaning that shows the unity of man's being, thus extending his sovereignty to the reality of his past.

To show how "allusion to myth may [be used to] give meaning to the present"(Beaton 1991:44)³, it is important to note the historical circumstances that made the values and the specificity of being Greek central to Ismail Ferik Pasha's life. The Greek state which was formed in the years following the war of independence from Turkish occupation in 1821, as R. Beaton has argued, also saw the rise of a Romantic interest in folklore, Romantic historiography and nationalistic poetry through which the Greeks proclaimed the specificity of their own identity:

all cultures use their perception of the past to define and validate themselves in the present by the making of a tradition. Under the impact of Romanticism and the consolidation of nation states throughout Europe in the nineteenth century, perceptions of the past were more radically revised[...] each nation set about discovering and asserting the value of the *tradition* (or traditions) that in the past had shaped it towards its present condition and in the present continued to guarantee its difference from rivals and its potential for realizing its unique aspirations in the future[...] The newly defined[Greek] nation therefore had, as a matter of urgency to *create its own past* (1988:99).

It is in the historical context of the adolescence of Greek nationhood that the fictional account of the life of the historical

³ Although R. M. Beaton's comments refer quite specifically to G. Seferis' poetry, they are pertinent to this analysis as well, in terms of intertextual allusions that will be made later in this chapter.

Ismail Ferik Pasha alludes, to exemplify man's relation to the past and a specific person's living his present in relation to his past, where the past stands for what is defined in Galanaki's novel as an "έσχατη γνώση"(197).

Because of the violation of an original taxis through Ismail's islamization, taxis can be restored through a return to the principles of the specific societal group he was originally born into, namely the Greek and Christian one. The return to the original status of affairs is followed in terms of the narrative and in terms of the story. Thus, Ismail's quest, as developed in the narrative about his life, takes on attributes of the *nostoi*, the cyclic epic narratives⁴, as the course of the life of Ismail Ferik Pasha seems to follow a cycle: from the Lasithi plateau, to the port of Herakleio, to Egypt, to the port of Herakleio, to the Lasithi plateau again. Although by definition the *nostoi* imply a restoration of the violated taxis, since the ordained physical passage homeward leads to a recovery of honour and status in the fatherland, and thus to the restoration of the metaphysical dominance of the "έσχατη γνώση", the *nostos* of Ismail Ferik Pasha is never completed in its metaphysical dimension, challenging the reality of allegiance to the principles of a single *genos*, *oikos*, *patris* that the cyclic nature of the *nostos* demands.⁵

⁴ See Edith Hall (1989:32, 35).

⁵ The terms *oikos*, *genos*, *patris* are derived from Paul Magdalino's discussion of the notion of Honour among Romaioi(1989), where he extrapolates from modern Greek society, to argue that the two basic coordinates of a social existence for an

Ismail Ferik Pasha, stripped in Galanaki's text of the supernatural strength of epic heroes like Diyenis or Odysseus, concludes his subversively pedestrian *nostos*, only to make the point that allegiance to any kind of orthodoxy such as the *genos - oikos - patris* set of values prescribe, is in vain and useless since there is nothing pure "out there" which would make the effort achievable. His *nostos*, through the war that he has to fight, therefore becomes "τίποτε άλλο από μιά σπουδή απογύμνωσης" (138) from the mandates of the past that strive to annihilate half of his duality.

individual are *genos* (birth, kin, ancestry) and *patris* (native land or city). "Patris, like the ancient Greek polis was a small introverted self-regulating agricultural community whose members all knew each other well[...] and took pride in their collective identity. *Genos* was the group of relatives in which most people instinctively invested their loyalty and trust defining being well born as being born free and native." (184) *Oikos* was the locus where *genos* and *patris* converged to carry on the traditional order/*taxis* and established procedure which in turn would guarantee individual and collective honour. As "the icon of the heavenly court"(187) the *oikos* forced shame- *αίσχύνη*- as a means to prompt the individual to do the right thing and adhere to an allegiance to orthodoxy. "Shame besets or should beset the honourable person when in a conflict of loyalties, he or she yields to one side and is found out by the other, whose *taxis* has been violated. Honour is accordingly satisfied when *taxis* is restored."(198)

In order to investigate the way in which Galanaki's novel subverts the notion of *nostos*, and in order to draw attention to the way the narrative connects the course of the personal story of its protagonist to the public history of his fatherland, I will discuss *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά* along with the equally subversive novel *Midnight's Children* (Rushdie 1982). In so doing, by establishing an analogy between two novels written by writers of opposite sexes I am using the intertextual connection to make the more general point about how subversive texts can undermine the fundamentality of the distinction between male and female writers. Galanaki's and Rushdie's texts, irrespective of the sex of each writer, achieve a denial of the existence of a textual or historical continuity and monosemantic unity, through gender-conscious narratives that turn personal experience into a source of subversive public history.

The main character and narrator of *Midnight's Children* is Saleem Sinai, who was born on the stroke of midnight on August 15th, 1947, at the precise instant of the achievement of India's independence; he was taken as a child by his family to Pakistan, when the Indian nation split, was forced to join the army there, and later returned to Bombay to narrate his story and the history of his country as a thirty-two-year-old adult.

Although Saleem is one of the one thousand and one children born at the same time, his fate, which makes him part of such multiplicity, is none the less specific to him, in that he finds himself able to act as transmitter and receiver of thoughts, free

to enter the minds of the rest of the midnight's children. As he is the only medium of communication between all these voices, Saleem becomes responsible both for the narration of their individual stories and for their collective purpose of children and a nation born at the same time.

Similarly, the fate set out for Ismail when he was captured by the Egyptian army was common to other children of his age, not only in the Lasithi plateau, but in other parts of Greece as well. The narrative provides two notable examples of similar fates which however took very different courses; on the one hand, one finds Ismail's brother Andonis, who escaped his captivity and managed to remain Greek until the end, and on the other hand, one finds Omer Pasha who was born Greek under the name Michael Lattas and later forcibly Islamicized like Ismail, but willingly accepted his new-found status. Ismail's own fate, like that of Rushdie's Saleem, retains a unique quality with respect to the two oppositional courses of life discussed above; at the moment of his capture, which coincides with the moment of his symbolic birth, he finds that he is able to communicate both with the dead and the living. The capacity for extraordinary communication, which proved dangerous for Saleem proves to be fatal for Ismail, when he finds himself returning to his homeland as a general of the Egyptian army to crush the revolution that his brother was funding, and he is poisoned on the orders of Omer Pasha as a punishment for his alleged cryptochristianism. In that sense, Ismail's personal story of a dual identity is linked to the history of his birthplace, to show that, as Saleem says, "there is

no magic on earth strong enough to wipe out the legacies of one's parents"(402).

3. 2. Fathered by History

Saleem' s observation that when "I tumbled forth into the world[...]I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country"(9), can be seen as metaphorically relevant to Ismail's case.

At the time of the Ottoman attack on his native village on the Lasithi plateau, while all the men were fighting the enemy, and the women, children and invalids had gathered outside the entrance to the cave as a last resort, Ismail, a young boy then, driven by the "ηδονή της περιέργειας"(15), entered the cave and hid deep in its darkness.

The symbolism of the sheltering cave as a spherical space, a womb that protects without making any demands, is a central metaphor in the narrative. The walls of the cave in which Ismail hid are described as "στάζουν από την αγωνία του τελειωμένου σχήματος· γι' αυτό λαβαίνουν όποια μνήμη τους αποδοθεί"(14) and take on the attributes of the archetypal and the eternal secret functions of nature, of the origin of all things which exist in a free-flowing, fluid state, until the inevitable moment of birth forces them into the world making them specific and solidly defined. The symbolism of the cave as womb has been given an interesting twist in the narrative, though: Immediately before his fatal exit from the salutary darkness, Ismail found the rusty

blade of a knife which he took and kept hidden under his Ottoman pasha's clothes until his death, saying that its definite shape "όρισε τη ζωή του στην τροχιά των μαχαιριών"(16). Just as Saleem found that family history "had leaked into me[...] making me vulnerable to knives"(221), the blade that Ismail finds becomes an analogue for his own family history, which comes to disturb the undemanding status of life in the womb. The status of the blade as a phallic symbol in the narrative about Ismail Ferik Pasha's life, serves to illustrate J. Lacan's argument that,

symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him[...] so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairy spirits, the design of his destiny; so total that they give the words which will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts which will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and beyond his death itself. (Lacan 1968:42)

The blade comes to signify the omnipotence of the family Law, whose commands Ismail violated, showing that the fate of every son born into the symbolic order of the law of the father is always already predefined and predetermined for him along the faithful/renegade opposition. It becomes a constant reminder that the violated taxis had to be restored through his necessary and redeeming *nostos* to the fatherland fifty years later, an act which would balance the archetypal equation, reestablish the logic of identity where the father coincides with the son, and close the cycle.

Ismail was forced out of the cave by the enemy and decided to consider the moment when he was captured as a first death and his life as a captive as a second life precisely because of the law of the father: "Τη λογική του συλλογισμού του ενίσχυε το γεγονός πως ήταν αγόρι, άρα μικρός άντρας και η φυσική του θέση ήταν στην πλατεία ανάμεσα στα κουφάρια των σφαγμένων αντρών και ακριβώς δίπλα στου πατέρα του"(17). Thus, the metaphorical birth of Ismail coinciding with his exit from the cave, marked his symbolic captivity by the laws of his *genos*, *oikos* and *patris*, while at the same time it signalled the beginning of a new life of literal captivity enforced by the historical circumstances at the time. In that sense Ismail was born handcuffed to the history of his nation, a notion fortified by his first impression as a "νεογέννητος"(17), namely that in contrast to his brother to whom he was securely tied, his own position outside the cave/womb had acquired the double significance of the "διπλή του θέση, σαν μόλις πεθαμένου και σαν μόλις γεννημένου"(24).

The symbolic rebirth of Ismail into a new life of captivity was a double violation; on the one hand, it violated the demands which the cultural Law made on all males faced with the enemy, while on the other hand, it violated the natural law since, by his own admission, his new life "εφόσον είχε ήδη πεθάνει μια φορά[...]ανέτρεπε την τάξη"(21). Just as in the case of Saleem, who was prophesied to "*die...before he is dead*"(88), the memory of the double insolence of Ismail, as a man just dead and just born, became the cause of marginalization and isolation in terms of

both the old as well as the new life which he was forced to begin. In the specific historical circumstances the duties of children to history acquired a pressing significance, since all the children born in these troubled times, Ismail and Andonis among them, as Saleem Sinai says about the midnight's children "were only partially the offspring of their parents-[they] were also the children *of the time*: fathered, you understand, by history"(118). It becomes clear that the cause of Ismail's painful *nostos* is not to be found in his individual past, but rather in the demands of his collective future as a renegade Islamicized Greek at a certain moment of historical emergency.

Both Rushdie's and Galanaki's novels proclaim a belief in chance as they both explore the way in which the particular intentions of personal stories can be annihilated by being randomly connected to the narratives of historical events and the haphazard conflicts that arise from them. By linking the personal to the historical, and by presenting individual conflicting experience as the source of public history, the two novels subvert the notions of simple causality and undisturbed unity that can guarantee coherence, either in fictional or historical narratives.

Ismail began his second life as a captive of his family history, having been marked by a dual identity which had been born in the forbidden enclosure of the cave/womb on the Lasithi plateau. The historical implications of his duality that sprang forth from his metaphorical birth, make the pregnancy of

Ismail's second life similar to the pregnancy of Saleem's mother, whose peculiarity made the narration of its story necessary, especially with regard to the specific historical circumstances that surround it.

Both Ismail and Saleem admit that it was chance that coloured the subsequent courses of their lives. As they were both born in the midst of extraordinarily significant historical circumstances, their lives become public property because the timing of their birth accidentally links them to historical events whose outcome follows the two men in the disguise of destiny. Saleem says that his birth "owed a great deal to accident"(79) and the third-person narrator of the first part of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά* admits that "ήταν αποτέλεσμα της τύχης ότι το αγόρι[Ismail] μπάρκαρε για την Αίγυπτο κι ο αδερφός του για την Πόλη"(27). Later, Ismail himself recognises that his life was "στηριγμένη σε μια παρόρμηση σχεδόν της τύχης"(67), since "μια εύνοια ή μια αποστροφή της τύχης δίνει καμιά φορά το τελικό ύφος σε μια κατάσταση"(75).

As both Saleem's and Ismail's 'presents', as presented in the narratives about their lives, refute the idea that their current status rests upon some archetypal intention or some fatal necessity stemming from their 'pasts', the historical dimensions of those same narratives appear to have no stable or final point of reference to rest upon, apart from lists of events that, as Ismail puts it, attempt to categorize complex and polysemous

occurrences through the "αναμφισβήτητο ρεαλισμό των ονομάτων και των τόπων"(106).

In *O Blos του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά*, history is not presented as a stable source of truth and knowledge, but as a series of conflicting interpretations of events, suggested by the three versions which concern the fate of Ismail's mother(21,59), as well as the three versions about his own death. In addition, the omniscience and objectivity of historical accounts is further denied in Galanaki's narrative by the fact that even the outcome of a battle favourable to the Egyptian forces can be interpreted as defeat if seen from a different perspective "φαίνεται πως η ιστορία είχε αλλάξει νόμισμα στη Δύση και δεν μετρούσε με το ίδιο μέτρο το αποτέλεσμα της μάχης"(41) Both Ismail, who sees history not as an "υπόθεση των θεών, μα των ανθρώπων και των σχέσεών τους"(75), and Saleem, who presents his own "personal version of history"(410), refute history's claims to truth, and whereas Ismail wonders "ποια φαντασία της ιστορίας"(148) forcibly categorized his double identity into a string of oppositional distinctions, Saleem implores the reader of his story to grieve for him as he has been deprived of the means to "deflate the great ballooning fantasy of history and bring it down to a more manageably human scale"(345).

In the midst of frustrating and conflicting historical interpretations, both Saleem and Ismail led their lives in exile, focusing their attention, with equal determination, on considering the implications of the events concerning their past.

Ismail says that "γνώριζα από παλιά πως η αλήθεια ενός γεγονότος δεν είναι ποτέ μία, και αυτό δεν ήταν ίσως το πιο σημαντικό, όσο να ανακαλύπτω ποια ανάγκη επέβαλλε την ταξινόμηση εκείνων των αληθειών"(132), while, by the same token, Saleem seems to be convinced that "reality is a question of perspective"(165).

In Ismail's story, reality acquired another perspective at the precise moment when he was separated from his brother at the port of Herakleio, when the different courses that they were accidentally forced to take signalled, as Ismail says, the "αλληλουχία των χωρισμών, που χαρακτηρίζει την έναρξη της ζωής ενός αιχμαλώτου"(27). He asked his brother's name in order to "στερεώσει για πάντα τον ήχο του αδερφικού ονόματος πάνω σ' αυτή τη θάλασσα"(27), and in this way the name of the first born in his family 'Αντώνιος Καμπάνης Παπαδάκης του Φραγκιού' also firmly establishes the name of the father, which along with the knife from the cave and the family history, told and kept alive by the cult of the dead -the *απόντες*- make up the memory of a *genos*, an *oikos* and a *patris* that Ismail will always carry with him. The connection that Ismail made between the brother's name, and the sea that would enforce their separation, foregrounds the sea water as symbolic of the memory of continuity, of the necessity of Ismail's *nostos*, of his return to the fatherland through the intervention of the brother. At the same time, however, it foregrounds the sea water as the threshold of a stream of opposites stemming from the pair faithful/renegade which would in the future establish the difference between the two brothers

and would have to be annihilated in order for the cycle to be completed properly.

The separation of the two brothers establishes the fundamental opposition that would separate them until their deaths, and would always be preserved by memory. Memory also plays a central role in Saleem's life, since he declares that "I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory[...] is being saved by the corruption of the clocks"(38), in much the same way as Ismail armed himself against the uncertain future when he "δώρισε αυτήν την απόφαση [of memory] στον νεογέννητο εαυτό του σαν κωνσταντινάτο, κι έκρυψε το φλουρί στα ρούχα του μαζί με το μαχαίρι της σπηλιάς"(26). The memories that Ismail took with him to the war were the narrations of his dead ancestors, the "απόντες", in an effort to keep his first life and his original identity alive, thinking that "η δύναμη της μνήμης θα μπορούσε να ακυρώσει το σταμάτημα μιας ζωής"(42), in the same way that Saleem's grandfather thought that he could keep in touch "with an earlier self[...] the way it was before travel and tussocks and army tanks messed everything up[...]guided by old memories[...]the inventions of ancestors"(11). Ismail's belief that "κανείς εχθρός δεν μπορούσε να μετατρέψει τη μνήμη του αιχμάλωτου, αν έμενε ζωντανή σε ήττα"(26) created for him a reality of the collective past of his *genos* which did not really exist before his capture by the Egyptians. The sum of the ancestral memories, however, did not provide him with the means to enjoy unity with his *genos*, but became the regulating force behind his inability to let himself belong solely to either one of his two lives in a concrete way. Thus, Ismail's

memory of the 'unwritten' narrations of the ancestors, which is like the family history "once set down in old lost books"(16) that Saleem now keeps in his mind, caused the distinct split of his dual identity, sealing his Christian origins into a secret cycle which would constantly interfere with his becoming, never allowing him either to connect the two separate lives or to enjoy living "δύο φιλόδοξες ζώες"(43) to the fullest.

Throughout Ismail's Egyptian years, the memories of his old life, the ancestral myths, never broke out of their mystical cycle to interfere with the linear realities of his new life, because as Saleem says "sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts"(47). The reality of Ismail's second life, which marked his rite of passage into manhood, was created by his acquisition of a new religion, name, language, customs, rituals, scenery, friends and myths, establishing its difference from his childhood along the opposition between cycles and lines.

Ismail's second life, which began on the salty sea water and continued with the same boat's journey into the Nile's fresh waters, soon made him detect the difference between the cyclical natural setting of the plateau of his *patris* and the endless linearity of the symbolism of the dominant natural feature of the new country. Thus he felt that his new life "φαινόταν να λύνει τον κύκλο της ανθρώπινης ζωής σε μια ευθύγραμμη πορεία εξέλιξεων", since in a dream he saw that "το ζωνάρι του οροπεδίου[...]λύθηκε για να ενωθεί με το σκίρτημα της γραμμικής κούτσας του Νείλου, όπου το τέλος δεν συνέπιπτε ποτέ με την αρχή"(31), and

where the need for the completion of the cycle would be replaced by the endless transformations of reincarnation.

Thus Ismail's Egyptian environment treated him as someone who had lost his memory, teaching him a new language, a new religion and giving him a new name, through which they constructed for him links to an acquired past that would come to reinstate what they conveniently defined as his loss of memory. Thus Ismail, feeling fortunate enough to have had the life of a soldier chosen for him, decided to let himself be transformed to meet the demands of his newfound fate. Similarly, Saleem, whom events had forced into exile, became a citizen of Pakistan, was "wormed into the Army [and] emptied of history [...] learned the arts of submission, and did only what was required of him"(350).

It is fair to argue, therefore, that when the first life ended and the second began, Ismail became a person who, like Saleem, describes himself as one who "submits to the life in which he finds himself, and does his duty; who follows orders; who lives both in-the-world and not-in-the-world"(356). Ismail lived in the world of the Egyptian army, but at the same time lived outside it through his decision "ν' αφοσιωθεί στη μνήμη[...]στολίζοντας το μέτωπό του με το στεφάνι του οροπεδίου[...]να δεσμεύσει στο θηλυκό συμβολισμό του κύκλου μεγάλο μέρος από το αίσθημα και το μυαλό. Εκεί θα εναπόθετε και το παιχνίδι του με το ανύπαρκτο, σαν άντρας"(34). The "ανύπαρκτο" refers to the real, though fragmented, memories that Ismail had of the Greek world and that area of his past that connected him to it. It was that reality which had had to be

erased by the continuous efforts of the new languages he was forced to learn, and which "όφειλαν ν' αντικαταστήσουν τον παλιό του κόσμο μ' έναν πλήρη και φανταστικό, που θα εκτόπιζε τον παλιό, ώσπου να γίνει αυτός μόνο ο χειροπιαστός κόσμος του άντρα"(33).

Ismail's new life is constantly referred to in the narrative in connection to his manhood, to his status "σαν άντρας". Despite the fact that the narrative makes clear that Ismail was "ανίσχυρος ο ίδιος να ορίσει τη μοίρα του"(33), it is nonetheless equally clear that he chooses to be passive since, by accepting the new life, unconditionally and without protest, Ismail repeats the sin of violating what is proper for a man of his *genos*, as he had done by entering the forbidden cave. His passivity, along with his destructive curiosity, gives Ismail characteristics traditionally attributed to women. Moreover, since maleness is associated with the bravery of the father's death during the turmoil that the Ottoman attack brought about, Ismail's future behaviour in Egypt can be said to be similar to Saleem's who, after the fights over Bombay stopped, did not behave as a hero should, but reacted with a cowardly and effeminate morality, and yielded to "popularity- the rather more dubious desire to do what is approved of"(172) instead of doing the right thing. The feminine status, in which Ismail enters his new life, is consistent with his fall from the status of maleness as defined by his *genos*, and is metaphorically sustained by the narrative's allusion to the "μυστικός αρραβώνας"(32) that bound him intimately to the people of his newfound Egyptian family. Ismail is nevertheless related to his original *oikos*, as represented by the paternal house, with the

same mode of connection, that is, through an engagement: "έλεγα πως ήμουν σαν αρραβωνιασμένος μαζί του"(170). In that sense, Ismail is portrayed like the woman in *Midnight's Children*, who, through her marriage, became part of a new family, her fate placed in the hands of the man who "had renamed her and so re-invented her, thus becoming her father as well as her new husband"(66). Thus, when Ismail states his devotion to and his dependence upon Ibrahim, the dominant presence in his Egyptian life, by declaring that "του είχα δοθεί[...]βρισκόμουν στο έλεός του"(119), he simultaneously reaffirms by this very declaration, his debt to the father of his first life. Through the enforced duality of having to pay allegiance to the demands of two families with oppositional interests, the narrative of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά*, as G. Thalassis argues,

αποδίδει στον Φερίκ πασά προβληματισμούς σύγχρονης γυναίκας. Οι γυναίκες για παράδειγμα ανήκουν σε δύο οικογένειες, την πατρική και του συζύγου, χωρίς στην πραγματικότητα να έχουν δική τους οικογένεια, αφού η σειρά του αίματος ανήκει στον άνδρα. Και η σχέση που υπάρχει ανάμεσα στις δύο οικογένειες, του πατέρα και του συζύγου, είναι σχέση προδοσίας. Όταν η γυναίκα ανήκει στον σύζυγο προδίδει τον πατέρα, όταν ανήκει στον πατέρα, προδίδει τον σύζυγο, με το ίδιο τρόπο που η ένταξη του Φερίκ πασά σε μία οικογένεια-πατρίδα-θρησκεία θα πρόδιδε την άλλη. (1991:108)

From this point on, the narrative makes clear that Ismail "ούτε μια φορά δεν είπε ότι θα μπορούσε να ενώσει τις δυό ξεχωριστές ζωές"(34) as he had "διαχωρίσει τα πράγματα μέσα του[...]ευελπιστούσε ότι με τα χρόνια θα στερεωνόταν ο διαχωρισμός, ώστε να μην μπορεί να

διαταραχθεί από ανεξέλεγκτα γεγονότα"(43). He therefore led his second real life along with, but separated from, his first and secret one, being like the son of Saleem "the child of a time which damaged reality so badly that nobody ever managed to put it together again"(420). The cyclical symbolism of the Lasithi plateau, in contrast to the linear symbolism of the Nile, whose "τέλος δεν συμπίπτει ποτέ με την αρχή"(62) marks an oppositional couple, cycle(Lasithi plateau) - line(Nile-Egypt), and suggests a peaceful coexistence of Ismael's two clearly separated lives. However, since Ismail was accidentally pushed into a military life, and since chance ordained that he should fight against his fatherland, while in command of the Egyptian forces, it was not long before the clear distinction between lines and cycles, symbolised in the two sides of his identity, voiced its equally clear but conflicting demands. The parallel coexistence of two oppositional cycles was broken through the war between the two countries claiming his allegiance. As "το ζωνάρι του οροπέδιου[...]λύθηκε για να ενωθεί με το σκίρτημα της γραμμικής κούτσας του Νείλου"(31), the only constant factor that emerges from the blurring is the inescapable demands of allegiance to the prescribed duties of the son to the father, irrespective of new families, new countries and new languages.

3. 3. Fathers and Sons

The narrative testifies to the above argument through the story of Ibrahim, the son of the viceroy of Egypt, to whom Ismail came to be a close friend and companion in arms, as he rose

through the ranks of the Egyptian army. Ibrahim, despite his difference of view in matters of war, and despite the deep depression he was thrown into because of it, never opposed or disobeyed the commands of "όσα συμβόλιζε ο πατέρας του σαν εξουσία, σαν ιστορία και σαν αίσθημα"(48). When Muhammad Ali finally resigned his throne in favour of Ibrahim, his rightful heir, Ismail was on the boat that took the future viceroy from Egypt to Constantinople to be formally crowned by the Turkish sultan.

At this stage, his friend's disappointed obedience does not seem to touch upon Ismail's own feelings of what was due in terms of his own father. It is interesting to note that when, by necessity, the boat passed the coastline of Crete, Ismail went on deck to look anxiously at the island on which he was born, but he "ξαφνιάστηκε που βρήκε τον μυστικό του κύκλο εντελώς κλειστό, σαν να μην ανταποκρινόταν πια σε κάτι υπαρκτό, ή σε κάτι πολύτιμο[...]αναρωτήθηκε αν η ανάμνηση της πρώτης του ζωής είχε γίνει ολότελα αμετάβατη. Επομένως ακίνδυνη"(52). Returning below deck, however, a strange connection was made in Ismail's mind as he saw the depressed face of Ibrahim: although Ibrahim would soon be hailed as the new sultan of Egypt, clothed in "τα μόνα σύμβολα που επεθύμησε σαν άντρας, λάμποντας και ιερός"(53), the fulfillment of his desire to become sultan of the Ottoman empire was frustrated, because his life's ambition had to be abandoned in order not to disobey his father's command.

When Ibrahim died of the grief of having bound himself to the wishes of the sultan and his father with the "εκφραση της

αποφασισμένης πειθαρχίας που οδηγεί τον στρατιώτη στον θάνατο"(53), Ismail was reminded of the inescapable urgency of his duty as a son to his own father. As the case of Ibrahim showed, Ismail should not be afraid to die, but rather should be on guard, lest his desire be nullified. Having lost the only friend of his new life, Ismail retained the vision of Ibrahim's disillusion "να φτερουγίζει γύρω του, αγγίζοντας με το πιο τρυφερό φτερό το μάγουλό του"(53) thinking that "αν η ζωή του είχε κυλήσει στην τροχιά των μαχαιριών[...] άλλα μαχαίρια έπρεπε να φοβάται. Αυτά που σκίζουν μαλακά τον αυγουσιτιάτικο αέρα, σαν περιστέρια που κατεβαίνουν να πιουν νερό"(53). Ismail's life, which is a coexistence in a "δύσκολα κερδισμένη ισορροπία"(65) of two equally ambitious lives determined by the trajectory of knives which "ως ευθείες διαγράφουν τελικώς κύκλο, τροχιά"(Thalassis 1991:109), becomes doubly threatened both by linear as well as cyclical symbolism. Even the hitherto soothing maternal image becomes a call to duties long due to the father.

The delicate touch of a bird's feather as a metaphor for the disillusionment that signifies the death of the personal desire, which results from the demands of the Law of the father, exemplified in the case of Ibrahim, becomes prophetic for Ismail, who is terrified by the vision of his mother's hand dropping like a feather to caress his hair as if it held the blade he had found in the forbidden cave. G. Thalassis argues that since the knife is the most prevalent symbol in the narrative "ο Φερίκ Πασάς φοβάται το μαχαίρι ως φάλλο, γιατί ακριβώς θέλει να αποφύγει τις φαλλικές μεταφορές που θα καθορίσουν την σκέψη του. Δεν θέλει δηλαδή να

είναι ευθύς και να πράττει το ορθόν, δεν θέλει τη δυνατότητα της μιας μόνο επιλογής, τον φαλλικό μονισμό"(1991:105).

Despite reassuring himself by touching his belt which securely held the blade, Ismail cannot but connect the falling feather, an analogue of the knife, with the mother's voice which announced that he would soon have news of his long-lost brother. This suggests simultaneously that Ismail's life would soon enter its last stage towards the end of the cycle of his second life and will coincide with his physical death. The symbol of the knife reinscribes the inescapable demands that the law of the father makes of the son, while at the same time, by having Ismail see his mother holding the knife found in the cave, and announcing that the prime representative of the bloodline of the father will soon contact Ismail, the narrative also undermines the stereotypical association of cycles with the feminine. It proclaims that, irrespective of linear or cyclical shape, there is only one course that fundamental filial duty should take.

The accidental force that made Ismail and his brother Andonis take different routes demonstrates its full effect through the narration of Ioannis, who visits Ismail in Egypt and defines filial duty. Ioannis, whose face displayed "κάποια σημάδια συγγένειας, από την μεριά του πατέρα του"(55), reveals that Ismail's mother had died and that the first-born son of Fraggios Kambanis Papadakis was alive and successful in Athens. This revelation clearly puts Andonis in a position that rivals Ismail's compromised life. Andonis is a 'true' son to his father, the son

that continued living according to the demands of his *oikos* and his *genos*, doing all he could to serve the *patris*. Similarly, Saleem, having fought on the wrong side in the war, learns from his aunt Sonia "the inescapable truth about his mother's death, and also that his position is weaker than he thought, because in this part of the family the act of acceptance has not been made"(392).

The acceptance Saleem refers to reflects his dramatically changed status as son, when Mary Pereira, the nurse who assisted in his birth, confessed that she had changed the name tags of two boys that were born simultaneously to different mothers. Learning that he is not really the son of his father, Saleem feels that the rivalry between himself and his alter ego, Shiva, the 'true' son of Saleem's father, "that began that night would never be ended, until two knives slashed, downdowndown"(221). As in Ismail's case, Saleem's future is determined by the presence of the knife as a symbol guaranteeing the purity of the blood line of the father, which would be restored by the death of Saleem, or Ismail for that matter.

After the revelation, Saleem wonders about the proximity of the impending restoration of taxis: "if I must go when will the knives come for me?[...] And through his mind passed images transformed into a stabbing, red stained blade"(53), just as Ioannis's revelation, prophesied by the knife-bearing mother,

makes Ismail see him not only as a "ξάδερφός του αλλά και προάγγελος θανάτου"(63).

Ismail's memory, which, like Saleem's, was detached "from two worlds not one"(413), from being dormant, "ακίνδυνη"(52), was almost violently activated by the revelations of Ioannis, the angel who bears good news in the Christian tradition, as well as the messenger who bears bad news in the classical one, and who reminds Ismail of his inescapable duty to his father. As a representative of the father, Ioannis becomes Ismael's living link with the past, his fury, shedding all defences and pretences, and making the restoration of the original taxis imperative. He reminds Ismail, as Saleem himself had been reminded, that "sons can be better than their fathers, as well as worse"(333). Ioannis and Mary Pereira serve as the messengers of the truth that can restore the purity of the paternal line. Their task is to enforce the anagnorisis that the past both Saleem and Ismail left behind cannot continue its unified unfolding until the two men accept responsibility for the injustice they committed and pay their dues.

The solidity of Andonis' dutiful life, which, in opposition to Ismail's, "ήταν μία"(60) -since he was significantly still "ανύπαντρος[...] σαν να έλεγε ορκισμένος"(60)- changed Ismail's perception of the duality of his own life, in the same way as the emergence of Shiva as a constituent part of Saleem's hitherto singular identity made him think again about his present life. The differences between Ismail's Greek childhood and his Egyptian

adulthood showed "τίποτα γνήσιο, αποφάσισε, αν και στη γνησιότητά του"(58), just as Saleem felt that since the appearance of Shiva, the difference between his Indian childhood and his Pakistani adolescence had nothing real or certain to show, because "in the first I was beset by an infinity of alternative realities, while in the second I was adrift, disorientated, amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies"(326).

As soon as the notion of the purity and innocence of the unmarried Andonis enters the narrative about the life of Ismail Ferik Pasha, his desire for *nostos* begins to materialise in a web of cyclic metaphors about nature. These seem to dominate Ismail's thoughts, fortifying Ioannis' implications that *nostos* is for Ismail the natural way to resume and restore purity to its original status. Whereas previously the plateau had unfolded to become one with the line of the Nile, now the opposite happens, since the river's "υδάτινο κεφάλι γύρισε να δαγκώσει την ουρά του κουλουριάζοντας το σώμα. Κι ο ποταμός γύρισε έναν κύκλο μέσα στο οροπέδιο και το πλημμύρισε [...] τίποτε δεν μπορούσε ν' αγγίξει το μυαλό του απλά [...] ο ανύπαρκτος κόσμος [of the first life] είχε αρχίσει να επεμβαίνει στον υπαρκτό [of the second life] φουσκώνοντας ένα μάτι στο κλαδί, εκεί που πριν δεν υπήρχε τίποτα. Αν συνεχιζόταν η ωρίμανση, τότε ο θάνατός του είχε αρχίσει να κυοφορείται"(62). The image of the process of ripening, combined with the image of pregnancy, leading to birth and the harvest of a mature fruit respectively, allude to the adjective 'νόστιμος', meaning both 'belonging to a

return' as well as 'flourishing, yielding a return, productive'.⁶ Metaphorically they stand for the process of the pregnancy of Ismail's *nostos*, which would yield its fruit on the day of his return to his fatherland and "όσα τον κατέκλυζαν με τη χαμένη τους αθωότητα"(63).

The reminder of a lost innocence came to Ismail through the Greek language which Ioannis used to communicate the news of his brother's present circumstances. It is indeed the Greek language which delineates the parametres of the pasha's own future actions, through the semantics of filial duty in which Andonis individually, and the whole *genos* collectively, took a great interest.

Despite his decision to stay silent in the face of Ioannis' revelations, Ismail nevertheless realised that "τα εντός του ελληνικά[...]σαν ώριμο άντρα, θα τον εξωθούν σε κάποιες αναπόφευκτες αποφάσεις"(64). Therefore, language comes to occupy the space of the symbolic barrier separating the two halves of Ismail's life. Language is treated by the narrative in a way similar to the narrative of Saleem's life story, which proclaims that "the boundaries [between] states were not formed by rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain; they were, instead, walls of words. Language divided us"(189). Language becomes representative of the essence of Ismail's Greek-Christian side, alluding once more to the necessary course of his

⁶ Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*

nostos: in order to complete the cycle and achieve its full semantic potential, the notion of *nostos* will have to pass through Ismail's lips as part of the vocabulary of the as yet unused language of his *genos*; in so doing, by acknowledging the continuity of his bloodline, Ismail's *nostos* will allow him "ν' αποδώσει το κοινό χρέος"(65), to finally show him as 'true' a son of his father as is Andonis.

3. 4. Filial Duty and the Seeds of Nostos

Andonis' letters have the same effect on Ismail as the the boatman Tai's had for Saleem's grandfather: They deliver "an urgent summons [that] is about to set history in motion"(13). Ismail comes into contact with his past through the Greek language, which he uses to write to Andonis for the first time since his capture. His correspondence with Andonis does not simply reveal the hitherto unknown reality of his brother's life, however, but represents the 'unwritten' sum of what "αντιπροσώπευε μια περίπλοκη μόνο υπογραφή"(66), the signature of the first-born being the sign of the unbroken line of the father, by which the ghosts of the cycle of the first life acquired flesh and bone and marked a distinct course that Ismail's love and loyalty should take.

The written texts of the correspondence bring the two brothers together, providing details of each other's life, filling the gap between the time of their separation and the time of the narrative present. They also firmly establish for Ismail the presence of the body of the brother as proof of the continuity of

"το νήμα του αίματος"(69), which demands his loyalty and the pursuit of the quest for his "ἀγραφή εξιλέωση"(133). This is delineated by the myths narrated by the common ancestors.

In order to reaffirm the blood ties by the use of paternal language, although the letters are narrated in the third person, all the addresses that end them are given verbatim and use the capital letter for the second person singular pronoun: "γιατί έτσι Σ' αγαπώ (70), τώρα ξέρω πως έχεις σώμα και μπορώ να Σε αγκαλιάσω (71), όμως μου μένει πάντα χρόνος να Σε σκέφτομαι (74), Σε φιλώ (80), κάπου υπάρχουν στον κρυφό μου έρωτα. Σε ασπάζομαι (81), αν ήταν όμως δυνατόν να Σε αγγίξω πριν πεθάνω"(84). These addresses which are very erotic in a physical, secular sense, take on a sacred quality by the use of the capital Σ, consistent with the revelation of the single route to unity with the past and the "απόντες".

Andonis' letters say that the "απόντες", the dead ancestors, are actually installed in his house, persistent in loyalty to their origins and never allowing themselves to use their real names in a foreign place, for fear of easily sucking their memory into obscurity. In accordance with the common duty, Andonis himself uses the symbolic pseudonym 'Petros', which, taken together with the real name of the messenger Ioannis, becomes an allusion to Christ's apostles, and is thus related to the name Emmanuel with which Ismail was initially baptised; the connotations of Ismail's Christian name turn him into a symbolic saviour of his suffering *genos*, and turns his Egyptian name into an alias of his 'true' identity. In that sense, the name allocated

to the son by the father is repeated to Ismail as a reminder and a warning that family honour will be dependent on his actions. Andonis' letters reiterate Ismail's fundamental duty to his origins, just as the telegram delivered to Saleem by the prime minister had warned him that "we shall be watching your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own"(167).

Thus, when Andonis writes to Ismail that for him "ο όρκος ήταν έρωτας, ο μόνος του άλλωστε"(81) and therefore "ούτε σαν σκλάβοι θ' αποκτούσαν άλλη ιστορία"(69), he is actually implying that it is in Ismail's nature, as much as in his own, to be loyal to their origins that compel them to fight "για μια ιδέα ή για ένα πάθος, που θα στρεφόταν ακόμα κι εναντίον των συμφερόντων τους"(81). Ismail, implicitly accused of living in a compromised duality, writes to Andonis in order to bring out the difference in their respective lives and shake the singularity that his brother puts forward. Through the exposition of the differences, Ismail "του το έγγραφε ξεκάθαρα" that it was Andonis who had had the easy way, because Andonis considered their life as children to be a "συνεχιστέα μνήμη", whereas Ismail considered it an "απαγορευμένο γεγονός". Furthermore, Ismail, contrary to Andonis, "αν δε μπορούσε πια να ορίζει την κρυφή του ζωή, σε λίγο δεν θα μπορούσε να ορίζει ούτε τη φανερή"(82) whereas Andonis could control his existence, because "η μισή του ζωή ήταν βέβαια μυστική, πλήν όμως νόμιμη". In this sense, therefore, Ismail argues that Andonis "θα μπορούσε ν' αποσπαστεί από τη ζωή που έκανε και να στραφεί ο ίδιος εναντίον της" because he was not alone, and most important because "μπορούσε να διαγωνίζεται

τη ζωή των πεθαμένων, προσφέροντάς τους τις αποφάσεις της δικής του"(82). Finally, despite the fact that Andonis could immerse himself in visions "ενός υπέροχου θανάτου ανάμεσα στους συντρόφους", whereas he was constantly tortured by "προαισθήματα ενός βίαιου τέλους"(84), Ismail makes clear that "αν ήταν να ξανακυλήσει στη ζωή του αιχμάλωτου θα ξαναδιάλεγε την ίδια δύσκολη ζωή, γιατί είχε μάθει πια τη χαρισματική φύση της δυσκολίας, που βρισκόταν πέρα από το φως και το σκοτάδι της"(82).

The dramatic admission that proclaims Ismail's difference from Andonis, as his duality forces him to occupy a position torn between being faithful to the ancestral light and being a renegade doomed to the darkness of a life as an Islamicized Greek, provokes an allusion to the mythical qualities of the sea as the element that can annihilate that difference and make Ismail face up to his filial responsibilities: the sea stands for the space that separates, but, most importantly, connects Greece and Crete, as well as Ismail and the dismal 'present' circumstances of the "απόντες", who, along with the living Andonis, were forced into exile, but vowed never to forget where their real duty lay.

Since real duty is defined by allegiance to the commands of one's family law, Andonis' house metaphorically stands as an analogue for the uprooted *oikos* that claims the allegiance of Ismail. Andonis describes his house as purposely built in a way that signifies the constant longing for reunion with both the fatherland and Ismail himself, since "από τη μεγάλη βεράντα, που

επίτηδες την έκανε στη νότια πλευρά, έβλεπε τη θάλασσα κι έσμιγε με τις μνήμες των παιδικών του χρόνων. Τώρα γνώριζε πως κι ο αδερφός του, ο μόνος ζωντανός, βρισκόταν ακόμη πιο νότια στην ίδια κατεύθυνση"(68). After that revelation, it is significant that Ismail himself, the only living member of his *oikos* apart from Andonis, appropriately chooses to stay in the rooms that face the sea to the north when he arrives in Crete, because they would unite him with the terrace on which his brother could be standing and on which the dead ancestors might be strolling, their eyes searching "από πολύ ψηλά, σαν φάροι ακρωτηρίου" (96) for the lost *patris*, watching closely over Ismail's conduct at the same time.

The symbolism of the sea as the facilitator of *nostos* in *O Bίος του Ισμαήλ Πασά*, derives its strength from the recurrent presence of a very subtle oppositional distinction between "sweet" water meaning fresh water and "bitter" salt-sea water. This parallels the duality in Ismail's life and follows the other cyclical elements of the narrative.

When Ismail was captured, in his passage from Crete to Egypt "το ταξίδι της θάλασσας συνεχίστηκε με το ταξίδι του ποταμού [and] το γλυκό νερό έμελλε να περιστοιχίζει στο εξής τη ζωή του αγοριού με ηπιότητα"(28), since it is shown to have a soothing effect on Ismail's sorrow by the sound it made in the fountain in the patio of his Egyptian house. The fresh water however, is also associated in the narrative with the Nile Delta which combined "σε αδιάλυτο γάμο το αρμυρό και το γλυκό νερό" (35) and reaffirmed the oppositions within Ismail. In yet another opposition to the

effects that the fresh water had on Ismail, the sea water is constantly associated with captivity and loss: "η αλμύρα του Λιβυκού που σήμαινε προς νότον την αιχμαλωσία, έμελλε να σημάνει αργότερα τον βορινό κίνδυνο των εκστρατειών, ορίζοντας για πάντα το αλάτι στη λύπη"(28).

R. M Beaton has argued that "the idea of a return, whether fulfilled or not, is already built into the sea as metaphor"(1989:255). In the case of Ismail's *nostos*, however, the metaphor of the sea becomes what Beaton describes as "an element that simultaneously destroys and makes possible" where "creation and destruction [are found] in exactly equal measure"(1989:59).⁷ In that sense, since Ismael's *nostos* draws

⁷ Beaton argues that the reappearance of Odysseus in the Modern Greek metaphor of the sea, unearthed and reactivated by Seferis, is a deliberate strategy which serves to illustrate, as Seferis' own texts do, "the furthest possibilities that intertextual allusion can afford the Modern Greek poet in extending the metaphor of the sea" (268). Thus, the sea as metaphor becomes "the locus for the meeting of opposing worlds[...]the element that both connects the modern world with the ancient and establishes the distance between them" (261), leaving open "the possibility of *nostos* for modern man exiled from his ancient roots (Seferis/Cavafy)" (261); It can also stand as the opening of a "voyage into the individual and collective unconscious (Embirikos/Elytis)" (262), or even "as the space in which inner imaginative experience can be freely realized (Fakinou)" (264). The metaphor, Beaton continues, "increases in complexity because the number of available texts[...] has multiplied, thus expanding the range of potential

on strong intertextual parallels with the Homeric quest, either as a futile voyage to Kythera or as fruitful as the way to Ithaca, instead of examining the intertextual play of Galanaki's text with the themes of Odysseus and *nostos* in general, so as to argue about the specific strategy involved, it is more helpful to examine the intertextual relation of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* and in particular Andonis' last letter, to Seferis' "Thrush," letting the poem bear the rest of the endless possible intertextual allusions.

Andonis, as the narrator in his letters, has a similar role to the narrator in "Thrush"(1974) whom Seferis has described as "ένας κάποιος Οδυσσέας" (1984:31), speaking in both cases from a house near the sea. Andonis' voice, like the voice of the narrator of Seferis' poem, represents the collective despair of all those who have lost their homes and have been forced into exile because of war. As Andonis described the family members stubbornly refusing to lead a new life away from the fatherland, the narrator in "Thrush" speaks for those who "τρελαίνονται στα καταφύγια"(A';6). If, in Seferis' poem, the house by the sea is an analogue for a way of life, the analogy can be seen in Galanaki's novel as representing the close relation between *oikos* and *genos*. The "απόντες" who live in Andonis' sea-view house in Athens are representatives of Ismail's uprooted *oikos* who, like the houses

reference that can be actualized by the later writer through intertextual allusion to the work of his predecessors"(265).

in "Thrush", "έχουν τη φυλή τους"(Α';11) and they "πεισματώνουν εύκολα, σαν τα γυμνώσεις"(Α';40). What Andonis writes in his letters to Ismail situates him along with all the people who live in exile "σε καμάρες γυμνές μ' ένα κρεβάτι σιδερένιο χωρίς τίποτε δικό μου"(Α';25-6), as well as with the narrator in "Thrush", whose collective grief becomes one "μ' εκείνους που έφυγαν/μ' άλλους που θα γυρίζανε αν μπορούσαν/ή που χάθηκαν"(Α';17-20).

Andonis, the narrator in exile, through his letters, reminded Ismail of his inexorable connection to the history of his *genos*, activating the memories of an inescapable fundamental duty that will be fulfilled through a sea voyage, just as the visitor who had "το φέρσιμο του Ελπήνορα"(Β';4), the unburied shipmate of Odysseus, did for the narrator of "Thrush".

Andonis' last letter to Ismail is symbolically the text that finally makes Ismail's *nostos* an unconditional imperative for his reacceptance by his *oikos* and his *genos*. Ismail's decision to lead two different lives without ever separating them but without ever letting them blend either, does not find any justification with his older brother. In the last letter, the only one presented verbatim in its entirety, Andonis returns to identifying Ismail with their father, because "του έμοιαζε μικρός", and therefore before severing their correspondence, bids him farewell "οποίος ήσουν παιδί" (85) through the metaphors of a very telling dream that reiterates and reinscribes the primacy of loyal filial duty to one's heritage.

The dream Andonis saw in the sacred time of the first prayers of the Christian's day "ώρα όρθρου"(85) involves the two brothers as boys "σαν να κατείχαμε παιδιά μικρή κασέλα με παλιό θησαυρό, και σαν να μας την πήρε κάποιος και την έκρυψε" (85). The trunk, which Andonis found and opened, contained the archetypal texts of Graeco-Christianity both in terms of language, and in terms of religion "τα παλιά βιβλία, Τριώδια, Μηνιαία, Παρακλητική" and "χρυσάφι καθαρό" under the books. There is a telling reference to the trunk in an earlier part of the narrative when, according to one of the versions accounting for the fate of Ismail's mother, she defied the enemy, continuing her life dressed in "τα καλά της"(21)[...]μεταξωτά φορέματα"(22)" worn at weddings as well as at funerals, until they were gradually reduced to shreds by constant use. Unable to replace them, Ismail's mother clothed herself in some of her husband's clothes, which she found "στον πάτο της κασέλας"(24), where she hid the key to the paternal house, "στην σχεδόν αδειανή κασέλα λέγοντας πως δεν χρειαζόταν πια να κλειδώνει"(23). The importance of the treasures hidden in the old trunk serve to remind Ismail that his duty lies where his first scattered memories come from, in a very similar way to "Thrush": "Όπως όταν/ γυρίζεις απ' τα ξένα και τύχει ν' ανοίξεις/ παλιά κασέλα κλειδωμένη από καιρό/και βρεις κουρέλια από τα ρούχα που φορούσες/σε όμορφες ώρες"(B'40-44).

At this point, there is an ironic intertextual link to be made to *Midnight's Children*, in terms of the valuable contents of a family trunk. The child, Saleem, was looking for a costume for

his part as a ghost in the New Year's play and opened a trunk belonging to his grandfather, where he found a perforated sheet, "the answer to his prayers"(31). Saleem's unfortunate choice turned out to be a treasured family token and provoked his grandfather's wrath; he strode up onto the stage and "unghosted"(31) him immediately. When at a later time, however, the adult Saleem comments on this story, he says that the trunk helped him to account for the important implication of events that are indispensable to the development of himself and his narration, but which had taken place in his absence, that is before he was born. He reveals that, "I seem to have found from somewhere the trick of filling the gaps in my knowledge[...]down to the last detail[...]the clues one stumbles across, for instance by opening an old tin trunk"(19). What the episode of the opening of the trunk taught was that "most of what matters in our lives takes place in our absence"(19), just as in Seferis' poem, even after the time of celebration has ended "το άρωμα της απουσίας"(B';46-47), what has passed, remains definitely present, referring back to the omnipresence of the "απόντες" in Galanakis' novel. This allusion becomes particularly powerful since Saleem had dressed up in the cloth that had celebrated the meeting of his grandparents, at the founding moment of the whole family tree, just as the clothes that the narrator in "Thrush" finds in the trunk had been worn during "όμορφες ώρες, σε γιορτές με φώτα/πολύχρωμα"(B';43-45), a reference back to the clothes of celebration. Those relate to the archetypal texts of Christianity which lay hidden in the old trunk that Andonis opened, reminding

the reader of Ismail's friend, Ibrahim, "με τα λαμπρά μεταξωτά που πάντα ερχότανε ντυμένος για να μου θυμίσει τις Ελληνικές μου γιορτές"(159), prophetically foregrounding the father who will soon greet Ismail at the end of his *nostos* "ντυμένος με χρυσοκέντητα άμφια και ψέλλνοντας"(173).

The sacred clothes of the Christian celebrations that come out from a trunk serve to show, through Andonis' words in the dream, and quasi-Elpenor's words in the poem, that although the two interlocutors took separate roads, to the north and the south respectively, as Ismail and Andonis did, the real destruction does not lie in the separation, but is rather to be found within themselves, as in "Thrush" the persona of the quasi-Elpenor says "Αλήθεια, τα συντρίμια/δεν είναι εκείνα· εσύ 'σαι το ρημάδι[...]συντρίμια,/είμαστε εμείς"(B';47-8,54-6).

In the dream, Ismail wisely suggested that they scatter the gold in order to avoid fighting over its distribution, and he proposed to share what was really worth sharing, the Christian books "που έκρυψαν τον προπατορικό θησαυρό", the archetypal texts that defined the identity of the whole *genos*, of which one should be put upon the chest of the dead father "αντί για εικόνισμα". Suddenly, Andonis realised that, although it was the father that had really died, Ismail had turned "διάφανος από το θάνατο του πατέρα", crying and holding his share of the books close to his own heart. Since it fell to Andonis' duty, as the older brother, to protect his child brother who suggested that "ας περπατήσουμε μαζί όλο τον δρόμο της αιχμαλωσίας"(85), he looked at Ismail ready to

proceed united by the common misfortune. However, Andonis did not see in his brother the face of a child but that of a grown man, which was presented in a different shade of gold. This shade was neither similar to the gold of the ancestral treasure, nor similar to the gold that 'naturally' matures the crops and, as Andonis had made clear, signifies brotherly love: "το αεράκι παίρνει πράσινα τα στάχνα και τα γυρίζει ολόχρυσα, δες, έτσι σ' αγαπώ"(85). The shade of gold that Andonis saw was that of a bronze statue "Πάλι σε κοίταζα. Το πρόσωπό σου δουλεμένο στον χαλκό· κοντά καμπύλα γένια, πελεκημένα ζυγωματικά και τα σγουρά μαλλιά σου σ' ένα φέσι"(85).

Just as the quasi-Elpenor argued that the statues in the museum come of of their enforced rigidity and "σε κυνηγούν, πώς δεν το βλέπεις;[...]με την αλλοτινή μορφή τους που δεν γνώρισες/κι όμως την ξέρεις"(B';27-30), Andonis metaphorically urges Ismail to shed the rigidity of his image as an Egyptian minister of war, and recognise the primacy of the image of his boyhood, which like all archetypes, one can never lose. Within the metamorphosed statues of "Thrush", a flame still burns and makes them "λυγίζουν· γίνονται αλαφριά μ' ένα ανθρώπινο βάρος"(B';24); this flame is the archetypal light "η φλόγα που καίει τον άνθρωπο" (B';16), no matter what changes the historical circumstances force upon one. Ismail, Andonis suggests, should look for the light that burns inside him, underneath his appearance in Andonis' dream as a bronze statue that showed the face not of Emmanuel Kambanis Papadakis, but of Ismail Ferik Pasha's bust in the Military Museum of Cairo, which is depicted in the photograph on the cover of Galanaki's novel.

Since the essence of Graeco-Christianity can never be reduced to shreds, Ismail recognizes that it is left up to him to pick up the pieces of his double life and reconstruct it to the former glory of his original status. Aware of his pressing duty, Ismail proclaims that both as an Islamicized Greek and as an Egyptian minister of war "ο χρόνος πνέζει[...]έπρεπε να βιαστώ"(170), as in "Thrush" the minister on the radio announces "δεν μένει πλέον καιρός[...]υπερτερεί συντριπτικώς. Ο πόλεμος"(B';88, 91-2). Through this war, the *nostos* of Ismail goes on its way to the end of his life, coinciding too, with his origins. The *nostos* ends in the ruin of his paternal house, where he hurries to meet the souls of his dead ancestors, much in the same way as the narrator in "Thrush" does, gazing at the sunken wreck of the Kíhle. Ismail preforms the Homeric ritual⁸ he knew as if it was a common practice, with much the same ease as the quite different 'νεκρόδειπνο' is performed in *Το Εβδομο Ρούχο*. Of the souls that come to drink blood, a dominant place is occupied by Ferik's father who repeats

⁸With regard to Odysseus' visit to the underworld (*Odyssey* XI), the intertextual connection between *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά* and "Κίχλη" can be expanded through Seferis' "Μυθιστόρημα" ΚΔ. As D. Ricks (1989) has argued, "Seferis makes the episode of the *Nekyia* in the *Odyssey* the centre of his whole poetic relationship with Homer"(83) and, unlike Sikelianos, considers it to be "something of enduring meaning and value"(144). Ricks goes on to say that what Seferis is proposing, by the revival of the *Nekyia* episode, is "an antidote to anger and suffering: to let the blood flow so that it may attract the dead, who may have the power to teach future generations a better way"(138).

that "να ξέρεις πως ξανά θα προτιμούσα τη σφαγή απ' την ατίμωση" (173) in much the same way as the old man (Socrates) tells the narrator of "Thrush" "πού να πηγαίνω/ γυρίζοντας σε ξένους τόπους, ένα στρογγυλό λιθάρι/ Το θάνατο τον προτιμώ"(Γ';21-3).

In "Thrush", the light of ancestral wisdom is put forward as the central unifying truth which is hidden behind the darkness of the horrific historical circumstances that made the narrator realise that "Καθώς περνούν τα χρόνια[...]βλέπεις τον ήλιο μ' άλλα μάτια[...]το παραμύθιο της σάρκας, ο όμορφος χορός που τελειώνει στη γύμνια"(Γ';27,30,32-3). Just as in Seferis' poem, despite the fact that the light has become both "αγγελικό και μαύρο"(Γ';56), the children still dive towards the white urns of the wreck, Ismail is set on his quest to complete his *nostos* as a "σπουδή απογύμνωσης"(138), striving to dive deep to find the archetypes of his *genos*, which like the urns of 'Κίχλη', never lose their shape: "ανάμεσα σ' όσα τον κατέκλυσαν με τη χαμένη τους αθωότητα. Εστω κι αν στο μεταξύ είχανε όλα μετακινηθεί και φαίνονταν αλλιώς στον αναλλοίωτο ήλιο"(63).

In the last sentence of the last letter, which forms the last sentence of the first part of the text, subtitled 'Χρόνια της Αιγύπτου, Ο Μύθος', Ismail turns to Andonis with the face of a grown man "λυπημένος άντρας" and talks to him with the only voice he could accept "με παιδική φωνή", saying, "δεν φταίει ο πόλεμος φταίνε τα όπλα"(85). In the context of the narrative, the weapons become a metaphor for the ancestral memories that enforce, through the construction of myths, a strict categorisation of

individuals according to their specific *oikos*, *genos*, *patris*, or religion, and consequently demand what is due to them, defining their status and at the same time defending it in the battle against other, different, oppositionally situated families, countries, or religions.

The first part of the text ends by setting the frame in which Ismail's 'Egypt years', having been touched by the 'Myth' of *nostos* that derives from his original Greek heritage. Through the narrative of the letters, written in paternal language by the first-born son of Ismail's family, the necessary conditions are set for the future of Ismail's life, as the narrative about it moves on to the next stage, 'The days of *Nostos* and History'. This section will complete the narrative and reveal the historical continuity of the demands of his *genos*. Ismail's life, after his correspondence in the Greek language with Andonis, is driven by the necessity of the historically impending sea voyage which will connect him to the archetypal myths of his *genos*. In fact, from that point on, Ismail, in his official capacity of minister of war for Egypt, decides to speak in Greek to the ambassador from Athens, as during those conversations it was clear that "μας περιέβαλλε ο υπαινιγμός της θάλασσας"(103).

3. 5. History-Bound Nostos

Ismail entered his Egyptian life as just dead and just born, a fact that produced a coexistence of a string of oppositional pairs symbolically making up his identity and which never blended, but were never fully isolated, either. In the same way, almost every

page of the narrative's discourse is woven with the terms of Ismail's symbiotic duality through a complex web of antithetical pairs whose first term corresponds to his Christian side and the second to his Ottoman existence. Some of these couplings can be listed as follows:

past-present/148	child-man/157
cycle-line/31	dead-born/20
friend-enemy/65	plateau-river/62
beginning-end/31	salt water-fresh water/28
captive-general/33	secret-obvious/82
real-fake/62	legal-illegal/82
Christian-Muslim/111	innocent-guilty/152
victory-defeat/133	certainty-doubt/133
virtue-vice/153	spring-autumn/156
knowledge-ignorance/157	benefactor-criminal/177
patriot-traitor/177	activity-passivity/134

Ismail's duality therefore, functioning in that binary way, suggests that he has to pay duty and pledge allegiance to the demands of both his lives. He was forced into a war of loyalty between the two folds of his identity, first in terms of his Greek side, through the correspondence in the paternal language, with his brother Andonis, and second, in terms of his Egyptian side, through being the general assigned to stop the revolution in Crete. Although the reality of the war that facilitated Ismail's *nostos* belonged "στην οθωμανική του υπόσταση", against which the few letters of Andonis had turned, unable to show "την αποδοχή του διαφορετικού"(100), it was the same war that, as Ismail admits, "όφειλε να μην διαψεύσει την πραγματικότητα μιας νοερής ζωής". Just as Saleem declares that in the aftermath of a war "my old life was waiting to reclaim me. I should have known: no escape

from past acquaintance. What you were is forever who you are"(368), it becomes clear that Ismail, who occupied "μια συμβολική σχεδόν θέση"(92) in the literal war against his fatherland, will find in that war the means to come to terms with his first life, or as he puts it, "να τεκμηριώσω τον ενήλικο άντρα - διαφορετικά τι νόημα θα είχε ο μυστικός τοκετός των ίδιων πάντα αναμνήσεων"(93).

His doubly symbolic position in that war obliged Ismail to face the fact that the fate and the outcome of the war between two nations, the original Greek and the adopted Egyptian, would be mirrored in his person; but in what sense? The way in which this mirroring is manifested can possibly be found in what Saleem discovered when he became puzzled about his own position in the midst of conflicting historical demands:

How, in what terms, may the career of a single individual be said to impinge on the fate of a nation? I must answer in adverbs and hyphens: I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively, in what our (admirably modern) scientists might term 'modes of connection' composed of dualistically-combined configurations of the two pairs of opposed adverbs given above. This is why hyphens are necessary: actively-literally, passively-metaphorically, actively-metaphorically and passively-literally, I was inextricably entwined with my world.(238)

As the *nostos* of Ismail is bound to history, the days of *nostos* and history narrated by Ismail himself in the first person are actually an account of oppositional modes of connection

separated by hyphens in the manner Saleem described. They are a confession of how Ismail tried to be true to his Christian self and his imagination by completing the *nostos* to his fatherland, and how, at the same time, he tried to be true to his historical self and the present reality by fighting a successful war against the Cretan revolution.

Saleem says that "there is nothing like war for the reinvention of lives"(407), and it is in the face of the war against Crete that Ismail discovers that his Ottoman side had a firm grip on him, having created powerful memories and, thereby, having acquired a past of its own. On the way to Crete, he cannot help but long for his "οθωμανική οικογένεια"(90), "έστω την κάπως συμβατική"(94), in the same way that on his way to Egypt as a child his last thoughts were devoted to the people that made up his Christian family. Soon, though, he reluctantly rejected the thought of yet another loss of family, visualising the separation in the following way: one by one the members of his Ottoman family "στοιχίζονται το ένα πίσω από το άλλο με τη διστακτικότητα βεντάλιας που κλείνει αργά"(94). However, the literal shape of the closed fan "ταυτίστηκε με το περίγραμμα του μαχαιριού που είχα πάντοτε μαζί μου"(94), its memory acquiring a metaphorical significance which could provide "αφορμή για μια καινούργια αιχμαλωσία"(91).

In keeping with the circularity of the narrative, just as he did when he left Greece, so when Ismail left Egypt he left behind not only those members of his family who were alive, but also the more numerous and much more powerful cult of the dead

Egyptian "απόντες", among whom Ibrahim occupied the most prominent place. Thus, Ibrahim, being a loved and missed friend, becomes a dominant "absent" of the second life, one whose presence denotes a new, firm captivity within the adopted memories of Ismail.

Whereas in the wars Ismail had fought for Egypt on Ibrahim's side, his duality had been kept alive by the image of the mother, in this war, which should have been fought on the Greek side, Ismail's duality needs a new reference point to help him "να μην αφεθώ στην ευκολία του ενός δρόμου"(95). Therefore, Ibrahim, whom Ismail invites back from the world of the Egyptian dead, becomes "η μητέρα της δεύτερης ζωής"(159), always reminding him of the primacy of his second life "αδιαφορώντας για την πρώτη"(160). The importance that Ismail attached to keeping his duality alive culminates in the fact that when Ismail was about to die, he called out the names of the two mothers of his two lives loudly. He did so, however, in the two respectively appropriate languages "ο ετοιμοθάνατος φώναξε ελληνικά τη μάνα του και αραβικά τον πριν από δεκαετίας πεθαμένον Ιμπραήμ" (187), final proof that his two lives had never blended but were never separate either and proving Ismail's reluctance to be absorbed by the demands of only one way of life.

Determined to make clear that "αν ήταν να πεθάνω ας έφευγα σωστός"(135) true to the demands of both his military rank as well as his own personal ethics, Ismail would fight the war as an Ottoman, "θα πολεμούσα με την πλευρά που τάχτηκα και θα το έκανα

με όλους τους τύπους"(104), as the example of Ibrahim had taught him, while at the same time he would seek the completion of his *nostos* for his Christian origins as the example of his brother's life had suggested, without letting his Egyptian life interfere in the process.

Ismail realised that this strategic arrangement, even through death, would not annihilate the metaphysical demands of either of his two sides, because "δεν είχα[...]τη συνείδηση της μιας καί μόνης πατρίδας που θα διεκδικούσε τη θυσία μου, διεκδίκηση που έβλεπα ν' ανήκει σε μονοδιάστατες σχεδόν εύνοιες, όχι σε τέτοιες αμφίρροπες καταστάσεις"(136). Although he could foresee that he would succeed, both in terms of his military duties, since the revolution of the Greeks was doomed to failure, and in his duty to his origins, since in death he would be reunited with his *genos*, he nonetheless sensed that a new loss would be inflicted upon him through the memory of his Egyptian family:

πρίν ακόμα φτάσω στο θάνατο, μετρούσε η ζωή. Η αιγυπτιακή μου ζωή μετρούσε έστω καί μόνο σαν διάρκεια, έστω καί σαν άλλη μνήμη μετρούσε-επαναλάμβανα-πάρα πολύ.[...] μετά την ήττα αυτής εδώ της επανάστασης, θα έπρεπε να καταφύγω στο αθηναϊκό σπίτι του Αντώνη[...] και θα καθόμουν[...] κοντά στο παράθυρο, καί θα συλλογιζόμουνα την Αίγυπτο. Όχι, δεν μπορούσα πια στην ηλικία μου ν' αλλάξω τα πεδία της μνήμης. Η ιδέα και μόνο της Αιγύπτου σαν χαμένου τόπου με ξάφνιαζε πολύ. Δεν ήταν δυνατόν. Και σίγουρα θα τρελαινόμουν, αν είχα δυο χαμένους τόπους αντί για έναν στην υπόλοιπη ζωή μου· ο δεύτερος μάλιστα να απλώνεται σ' όλα τα χρόνια της ωριμότητάς μου. Δεν θα εξαργυρωνόταν έτσι ο κερδισμένος θάνατος.(136-137)

The certainty that union with his *oikos* would only be cause for yet another debt, which could only be paid back through yet another new *nostos* to Egypt, made Ismail realize that the balance he had achieved in his duality should not be disturbed. At this point, as even the sea lost all its metaphorical connotations for Ismail "κοίταξα τη θάλασσα αφαιρώντας της κάθε ύλη", the reality showed itself plain and bare "δεν υπήρχε κανένας δρόμος προς τον Αντώνη"(137). The only things to whose reality Ismail could attest were the imminent war and his own image as the boy who had defiantly hidden in the cave: "χρόνια τώρα γύρευα ν' ανακαλύψω ένα σταθερό σημείο αναλλοίωτο από τις αλλαγές[...]το μόνο που είχε μείνει αναλλοίωτο ήταν το πρόσωπο του αγοριού που υπήρξα[...]για τον απλό λόγο ότι μου ανήκε"(138). Ismail's quest becomes one of uniting with "the boy of the plateau", after shedding all the demands made of him as an adult, and using the war as "τίποτε άλλο από μια σπουδή της απογύμνωσης"(138).

The prophetic announcement that Ismail makes at the beginning of the second part of the narrative "μετά από εννέα ακριβώς μήνες θα ενωθώ με τη γη της ενδοχώρας"(89) is marked by the apparition of his self as a child, and clearly signifies Ismail's reverse process of becoming: "τραβούσα τον αντίθετο δρόμο απ' το έμβρυο και μίκραινα αντί να μεγαλώνω" (133), just as Saleem admits that "my irrational notion was born, to grow illogically backwards in time, and arrive fully mature at this earlier -and yes, almost certainly innocent- adventure"(89).

Ismail's vision of himself as the boy of the plateau also signifies the only state in which he could be re-recognized by Andonis and his father, who both demand a belated redemption of the sin of passivity committed by him as a child in the cave and as an adult in Egypt. Therefore, the cycle of war in which he was first a captive would be completed by the war in which he has become a general, and the image of Ismail as the boy on the plateau with which he would unite in the springtime in nine months, unavoidably invokes the reverse pregnancy of the adult man Ismail and his deliverance as the young Emmanuel, just as the paternal bloodline and filial duty demand.

The relief Ismail expects from his child-self, the only part of his identity that he feels belongs to him unequivocally, will be attained only through the archetypal myths and rituals of his *genos*, as the text connotes by associating the reversed pregnancy (adult to child) to the "νεκρικές γιορτές της άνοιξης" in the "Πάσχα των Ελλήνων"(146)⁹. Ismail's desire to unite with the

⁹This is an allusion to Sikelianos' "Πάσχα των Ελλήνων" which as the poet has commented "είναι η πρώτη αυθόρμητή μου απόπειρα [...] μιας ουσιαστικής μου επαφής με το μεγάλο υποσυνείδητο Θρησκευτικό κεφάλαιο που οπωσδήποτε υπάρχει, σαν 'αλάτι αιωνιότητας', μέσα στα βάθη οποιασδήποτε εποχής. [...] Ο γνήσιος μύθος του Χριστιανισμού, μύθος που οι ρίζες του βυθίζονται στην ιστορία ολόκληρης της Ανθρωπότητας [...] εγκλείει ακόμα για τον άνθρωπο μια αιώνια σημασία [...] όπου ο άνθρωπος μπορεί να ολοκληρώσει και το νόημα του Μύθου και το νόημα της ίδιας του υπόστασης και ζωής"(1965:35-36).

boy on the plateau has to pass through his history-bound *nostos*, whose completion is facilitated by the historical circumstances of the war against the fatherland. As Ismail's quest is bound to *nostos* which, in turn, is bound to history, the parameters set by the demands of the cyclical Greco-Christian continuity of his *genos* seem inescapable. At the end of his quest, Ismail will not simply become the child he had been, but in so doing, through his death as Ottoman and rebirth as Christian, he will be forced to resume the name Emmanuel, the name allocated to him by the father. The process of Ismail's achievement of the deliverance offered by the boy on the plateau, is suggestive of a Golgotha, bound to the archetypal laws that the *genos* has set down for the redemption of sin. The reverse pregnancy, ending in the spring, will simultaneously be a very difficult and painful death into experience and rebirth into innocence, like Jesus' or Zeus', as suggested by the fact that Ismail's adventures began in a cave on the Lasithi Plateau, an allusion to the Dictaeaon Antron where, as the myth has it, Rhea gave birth to Zeus.¹⁰

¹⁰ The allusion, in the narrative, to the myth concerning the goddess Rhea's giving birth to Zeus in the Dictaeaon Antron becomes metafictionally suggestive in its subversive connotations with regard to the status of myths, as the text about Ismail's adventures that were 'born' in the cave of the Lasithi plateau, was created by a woman of the same name, Rea Galanaki.

3. 6. Stripping Nostos to the Bone

In accordance with the circularity that *nostos* demands, the narrative's own circularity is manifested by the fact that Ismail's capture and his return to the fatherland go through the same motions, in the same scenery and are expressed in two very similar paragraphs:

What Ismail saw as a child was:

το παλιό λιμάνι ήταν η τελευταία εικόνα της πατρίδας[...]έπλεε στη μέση της θάλασσας με τη μαρμάρινη σημαία του λέοντος του Αγίου Μάρκου απλωμένη στους αιώνες και τη μεταξωτή της Υψηλής Πύλης να κυματίζει στον άνεμο της ημέρας[...]Επιασε το χέρι του αδερφού καθώς ακουμπούσε σε μια χαμηλή γρανιτένια κολόνα, μπηγμένη στο λιθόστρωτο για να δένουν τα πλοία[...]Ρώτησε τον αδερφό πώς ονομαζόταν και αυτός απάντησε(27).

The port Ismail returned to as an adult fifty years later, had a new name which, however, as he says,

δεν έκανε το λιμάνι[...]διαφορετικό[...]Η μαρμάρινη σημαία του λέοντος του Αγίου Μάρκου συνέχιζε ν' απλώνεται στους αιώνες, ακρωτηριασμένη από το πέρασμα του χρόνου και σχεδόν αγνώριστη, ενώ η μεταξωτή της Υψηλής Πύλης να κυματίζει στον άνεμο της ημέρας[...]Εκεί είχα αγγίξει τελευταία φορά το χέρι του, πάνω σε μια από κείνες τις κολόνες. Προχώρησα τρέμοντας και την άγγιξα[...]δεν απάντησε όταν μετά από χρόνια τον ξαναρώτησα στο ίδιο σημείο πώς ονομάζεται, ζητιανεύοντας το έλεος της φωνής του. Δεν μίλησε(149-50).

The fact that Ismail considers the first motion of his *nostos* a turning upside down of the same scenery, "ήταν απλώς και μόνο μια παραλλαγή της αναχώρησης"(156-7) as he in a strange way came back "στη γενέτειρα με μιαν επανάληψη, με το αναποδογύρισμα μάλλον του (δίου σκηνικού"(93), implies both an artificiality as well as a theatrical quality which is reinforced by the description of the citadel as the adult Ismail saw it.

When the impression he had as a child of the citadel as an enormous everlasting monument is exposed as illusory and small-scale, "το ξύλινο φρούριο, που το είχανε ντύσει με βαμμένα χαρτόνια ώστε να φαίνεται χτισμένο με ογκόλιθους αρρωστημένους απ' τη θάλασσα"(149) the solidity of its symbolism is also subverted by its comparison to stage scenery. Since the citadel, which at the beginning of the narrative "οριοθετούσε ένα σύνολο αντιθέτων, αρχίζοντας από το υγρό ή στερεό και τελειώνοντας στο ελεύθερο ή περιορισμένο"(27) is only a "δήθεν" barrier made of cardboard, it follows that all the oppositions that were symbolically based on this masquerade to split Ismail into two antithetical selves are equally artificial and illusory.

Similarly, the metaphor used in *Midnight's Children* to describe the effects of returning to the place of his birth is a cinematic one. Saleem says that,

the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems -but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row

by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves -or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality.(166).

It is in the above sense that Galanaki's narrative openly espouses theatrical terms to continue with the conclusion of Ismail's *nostos* which is referred to as "η τελευταία πράξη της ζωής [του]". The acting out of a script refutes the metaphysical connotations of the difference between Andonis and Ismail as it "μετέτρεψε ξαφνικά το παρελθόν και το παρόν σε διακοσμητικά στοιχεία ενός επεισοδίου"(148). Furthermore, it becomes clear that since in the theatrical circumstances of Ismail's return "η εντύπωση του ψεύτικου ήταν τόσο σφοδρή", the reality of the initial separation from his brother becomes questionable as well, "σκέφτηκα μήπως το ήδη παιγμένο επεισόδιο δεν υπήρξε ποτέ σαν ζωή. Τι σήμαινε άραγε ένας αδερφός ξένος κι αντίπαλος; Κι ωστόσο είχε παίξει το ρόλο του άριστα, σαν να επρόκειτο για γνήσιο αδερφό"(149). However, even in the midst of all this doubt, Andonis' role-playing automatically designates an inescapable role for Ismail since they are both acting out the same archetypal 'unwritten' script. His *nostos* is marked by a very delicate balance between the oppositions that have just been exposed as artificial: namely "την ενοχή" of not wanting to embark on this *nostos* in the first place, and "την αθωότητα" (152) that he might regain by doing so. So, forced by history, he literally walks again on the same road of his literal and metaphorical captivity towards the final confrontation,

going through exactly the same motions preserved in his memory, as if observing a scripted ritual of symbolic repentance. In this he is just like Saleem, who, having "overstepped the boundaries of what [he] was permitted to do or know or be", discovers that "history had decided to put [him] firmly in [his] place [as] in the Theatre of War, the cable was to plunge [him] secretly but surely towards the crisis which would end with [his] final eviction from [his] own inner world"(295).

By this point, the initial farewell and the subsequent return get inseparably confused in Ismail's mind as parts of the same episode. He realises, therefore, that his real captivity lies with the preservation of the memories with which the script of his *nostos* was composed and was activated to restrain his freedom of choice. Ismail fears "μήπως έτσι δεν θα γλύτωνα ποτέ απο τα δεσμά της αιχμαλωσίας" and questions the usefulness of his return "τί γύρευα να επιστρέψω; Είπα πως ίσως την ελευθερία ενός θανάτου. Μήπως όμως και τότε δεν είχα πεθάνει συμβολικά; Πώς θα μπορούσα να εξασφαλίσω πως ο δεύτερός μου θάνατος θα μ' ελευθέρωνε"(157), in much the same way as Saleem, feeling that he is threatened by an unfulfilling mortal danger, wishes "how peaceful not to never to return! -to float in this cloudy nowhere, wafting further further further"(381).

As Ismail's *nostos* is bound to the memory of his childhood, he becomes determined that he will use this war to escape from the grip of that memory: "στράφηκα ξαφνικά με μίσος προς ο,τιδήποτε μπορούσε να σημαίνει η παιδική μου ηλικία[...]Αν εξεστράτευα εναντίον

κάποιου, αυτός ήταν η πρώτη μου ζωή[...]θα τιμωρούσα την οικογενειακή μου ιστορία. Χάρηκα που, εγώ ο ίδιος, θα μπορούσα να σκοτώσω το παιδί που με βασάνιζε σαν άντρα"(157). In so doing, Ismail's actions become similar to Saleem's, who, forced to "espouse[...] a prophesied historical role"(382) that made his acceptance by his family or his further exile conditional upon his present attitude, proclaims that

the object of my wrath was, in fact, everything which I had, until then, blindly accepted: my parents' desire that I should repay their investment in me by becoming great[...] the modes of connection themselves inspired in me a blind, lunging fury. Why me? Why, owing to accidents of birth prophecy etcetera, must I be responsible for[...]revolutions and bombs which annihilated my family? Why should I[...] accept the blame[...] *Why, alone [...] should I have to bear the burden of history?*(382).

Ismail, who, as an Egyptian minister of war is charged by history to head the campaign against Crete, is also burdened by a family history that demands the annihilation of his present official status and the restoration of his *genos'* honour through his acting out his original role as a Greek and a Christian. He turns against the sinful implications of the accidental event of hiding in the cave as a child instead of dying at his father's side, for whose redemption his life split in half and forced on him such an "ανόσιο νόστο"(168), not in order to deny that it happened, but in order to refute the connotations that this act had: "όχι σαν γεγονός" but "σαν μπόλιασμα της ψυχής"(157). What the adult Ismail has discovered, is the relentless way in which children are

subjected to the demands of adults, or better, as Saleem puts it, that this is what lies "at the bottom of it all; because children are the vessels into which adults pour their poison"(256).

Ismail, officially defined by the "χαμένη γλώσσα"(161) of his *genos* and his origins as "ο Αιγύπτιος αρχηγός του πολέμου, Κρής την πατρίδα, τουρκισθείς κατά την παιδικήν του ηλικίαν και αδελφός, ως λέγουσιν, του εν Αθήναις Παπαδάκη, όστις λαλεί την απλοελληνικήν"(104), is ready to resume the enforced connection with the demands of the line of the father. Having decided that "δεν τον ένοιαζε πια τι θα γινόταν"(185), Ismail allows himself to explore the final stage of his *nostos*, motivated by an "ισχυρή περιέργεια, μια δαιμονική σχεδόν περιέργεια"(157) of the kind "που στέλνει τους πιο παράτολμους θνητούς να επισκεφτούν το κυανό βασίλειο του Αδη"(159), similar to the very same, selfish "ηδονή της περιέργειας"(15) which compelled him as a child to go into the cave.

Before Ismail Ferik Pasha dies, he completes his *nostos* by visiting the house where he was born and at the same time metaphorically visiting the kingdom of his *genos'* dead. The actual building that Ismail visits is the locus where the *nostos* will end, both in terms of his personal quest to return and be safe in the womb and in terms of the archetypal quest to repay the duty claimed by his *genos*.¹¹ In order to achieve the "φιλήδονη

¹¹ In keeping with the narrative's position about the chance occurrence of historical events, the fact that Ismail's house was not destroyed is presented as an

κάθαρση"(170) that the house promises, Ismail has to "regress" in two stages. Firstly, he has to regress from an adult to a childhood phase so as to be recognised by his father and thus undo the "sin" he committed by hiding in the cave, and secondly, he has to regress from childhood to a foetal stage, in order to return to the security of the mother's womb.

When he went to his house, he found the key waiting where his family used to hide it, "κάτω από την πέτρα που το κρύβαμε"(170) metaphorically confirming that he was on the right track to restore the violated taxis. The verb "κρύβαμε" suggests the inclusion of Ismail in the Christian *genos* for the first time, whereas the "αυτόματος πληθυντικός"(170) is an indication that he has returned to his 'rightful' place of belonging. Key in hand, Ismail wanders "κατά πόσον ο ήπιος μεταλλικός φθόγγος του κλειδιού θα μπορούσε πια να ορίζει τη ζωή σαν αλληλουχία"(170), referring back to the certainty of the first sentence of the text when "το αγόρι σκέφτηκε πως το κλειδί θα μπορούσε να ξαναγυρίσει στην κλειδαριά, ορίζοντας μ' έναν ήπιο μεταλλικό φθόγγο τη ζωή σαν αλληλουχία"(13), and reaffirming the cyclical nature of the narrative.

Ismail, the adult, enters the paternal house with his eyes closed: "τυφλός, άρχισα να βυζαίνω τον ιδιον αέρα. Πέρασε αρκετή ώρα ώσπου ν' ανοίξω τα μάτια καί να πω ότι είχα χορτάσει το γάλα"(170).

effect of chance: "δεν κάηκε ωστόσο, γιατί μια μαγιάτικη μπόρα στάθηκε τόσο ευνοϊκή μαζί μου, ώστε να σταματήσει τις φλόγες στα διπλανά σπίτια"(168).

The house becomes like the mother, who, in a reverse repetition of the beginning of the narrative, "διά μιάς ξανασυνέλαβε, κύησε, γέννησε και ανέθρεψε τον δεύτερό της γιο"(17). Fed by the air of his *oikos*, Ismail manages to achieve the necessary regression, to the effect that when he opens his eyes he finds that "είχα μικρύνει σαν παιδί"(171). Having resumed the status necessary for the final recognition by his *oikos*, that is having regressed back to the age in which he had committed the original sin, he begins the process of restoring taxis by putting both Andonis' last letter and the blade he had stolen from the cave in a secret hiding place in the wall "επιστρέφοντάς τα όπου ανήκαν"(171).

At this point, it is interesting to note that although Ismail says that "η ανάμνηση της σπηλιάς δεν μπόρεσε, για ένα σωρό λόγους, να ταυτιστεί με την ανάμνηση του σπιτιού"(169), these two places seem to be identical in terms of the narrative. In that sense, the identification of the cave/womb with the paternal house reaffirms the assertion made earlier in this analysis, namely that the symbols of family law are inextricably bound to one's fate, certainly before one is born and even after one dies. By returning the blade to its rightful place in the paternal order, Ismail is totally prepared to balance the archetypal equation, reestablish the logic of identity where the father coincides with the son, and close the cycle.

As proof that the archetypal equation is finally balanced, the narrative offers the image of Ismail in the middle of the room, who, as if reenacting Odysseus' motions in the 'Νέκυια',

invited the dead through the ancient ritual "λέγοντας τα λόγια"(172)¹². The fact that Ismail has no difficulty in remembering and uttering the right words, generates another intertextual reference to 'Thrush' in terms of the poem's assertion that the fundamental essence of belonging to a specific *genos, oikos, patris*, can never be lost. More specifically, the narrative's metaphor for Ismail's decision to remember is that of a coin which stands as a token of the ancestral teachings of his *genos*; since Ismail's communication with his dead ancestors is achieved through the child-Ismail's pronouncement of those ancient 'unwritten' words, the connection to the children of 'Thrush' who dive near the wreck, holding a coin between their teeth, becomes unavoidable; even more so, since "in modern Greek superstition just as in ancient Greek religion, a coin in the mouth can only mean one thing: it is the fee for entrance to the underworld"(Beaton 1991:116).

As the script of the ritual demands, it is only after Ismail sheds (his own) blood into the small hole, that the house comes alive again, as the souls of the dead did for Odysseus in "Νέκυια". The shape of the house comes out of its long inactivity "οι οριζόντιες, οι κάθετες και η καμπύλη άρχισαν να

¹² With regard to the mystical words of the ritual, as related to what Ismail has called his "χαμένη γλώσσα"(161) by which he was defined, it is interesting to note that Seferis in "Πάνω σ' έναν ξένο στίχο" has the narrator spoken to by the figure of Odysseus "ψιθυρίζοντας ανάμεσα στ' ασπρισμένα/ του γένια, λόγια της γλώσσας μας, όπως τη μιλούσαν/ πριν τρεις χιλιάδες χρόνια".

τρέμουν[...]ζωντανεύοντας"(172) and all the images that had frozen in the first childhood, and in the first page of the narrative, "το χέρι στ' αδράχτι αριόταν να στρίψει τα δάχτυλα, το χέρι στο χαλινάρι αριόταν να λυγίσει τον καρπό"(13), became active again and picked up motion where they had left off: "είδα το χέρι της, που είχε σταματήσει στο αδράχτι, να στρίβει επιτέλους τα δάχτυλα, και το χέρι του πατέρα, που είχε σταματήσει στο χαλινάρι, να λυγίζει επιτέλους τον καρπό"(172).¹³

Whereas the mother briefly appears to announce an imminent and enjoyable reunion, Ismail's father comes dressed in "χρυσοκέντητα άμφια και ψέλνοντας" the psalms that celebrate Christ's birth "γιατί θυμόταν πάντα πως με είχε βαφτίσει Εμμανουήλ"(173), ironically celebrating Ismail's rebirth through regression into a childhood self which would mark the way to his physical death. Ismail's father immediately makes it clear that it is only because of their blood relationship that he decided to

¹³ This image generates yet another intertextual allusion of a reactivation of a dead world, as expressed through Seferis' poem "Εγκωμη"(1974), where against the background of the seemingly motionless activity of images like "γυναίκες γνέθανε, τ' αδράχτια δε γυρίζαν"(34) an Ascension takes place and "ο κόσμος/ ξαναγινότανε όπως ήταν, ο δικός μας/ με τον καιρό και με το χώμα"(45-47). Moreover, since Seferis' poem draws on Sikelianos' "Πάσχα των Ελλήνων", the revival of the dead world in the midst of historical hardship can be seen as significant of what Sikelianos describes as the "ανάγκη να συλλάβω [...] κάποιο σύνθημα ικανό να ιεραρχήσει εκείνα τα άλλα και να τα προβάλει αμέσως έπειτα από τούτο, ως μια Ιδέα καθολικά συνθετικής αποστολής[...]ως προς τη βαθύτερη και υπεύθυνη συνείδηση της όλης για τον Άνθρωπο Ιστορίας"(1965:38).

meet him: "μερικά πράγματα δεν αλλάζουν [...] ούτε στο βασίλειο των Ισκιων [...] και για τούτο σε δέχομαι"(173). However, by repeating that "να ξέρεις πως ξανά θα προτιμούσα τη σφαγή απ' την ατίμωση"(173), he launches an attack on Ismail, which, through the word 'ατίμωση' renews the implications of Ismail's cowardly and feminine status. He goes on to accuse Ismail of having lost his "true" self: "χάθηκες από τη συνέχειά σου. Μαζί σου έκοψες και μένα"(174), but in the end gives him some hope for a conditional redemption saying "Σε σώζει ότι ποτέ δεν θέλησες ή δεν κατάφερες να μας διαγράψεις[...]αναγνωρίζω μια προσπάθεια εξιλέωσης. Θα παρακαλέσω για σένα"(174). Although the father's precondition to reaccept Ismail is that he be defined as a child, "περίμενε να ξαναγίνω παιδί, να ξαναμπώ στο ίδιο σπίτι, για να με σκεφτεί σαν άτομο"(175), the fact is that the father demands that Ismail be true to the connotations of his Christian name Emmanuel, just as the father in *Midnight's Children* had instructed his son "to earn his name"(364) in order to resume his place in the family structure, or as Ismail puts it, in order to "να με δεχτεί"(174).

Although the father had finally consented to accepting Ismail back into the *genos*, it is Ismail himself who now takes up the issue of his father's attitude with feelings he describes as "αντίθετα. Σχεδόν αντίπαλα". He gradually begins to wonder if the rapprochement he had longed for throughout his life was impossible: "έλεγα όμως πως ευτύχησα μian όψιμη προσέγγιση—δεν τολμούσα ν' αποφασίσω πως μπορεί να ήταν μάταιη"(175). The futility of the belated and unsuccessful reunion with the father subverts the connotation that had made Ismail's *nostos* necessary, since

the word 'όψιμη' means 'late of fullfilment, late in the season,¹⁴ and suggests a process of ripening that, in turn, alludes to the adjective 'νόστιμος', meaning both 'belonging to a return', as well as 'flourishing and productive' and which by the end of the reverse pregnancy that coincides with the end of Ismail's *nostos*, should have yielded the 'νόστιμα' fruits, which all these years "τον κατέκλυζαν με τη χαμένη τους αθώτητα"(63).

What Ismail could not dare believe becomes an undeniable and final realization that through his *nostos* "Τίποτε δεν είχα κατακτήσει" (178). Despite the father's admission that "Εγώ, που γνώρισα τ' αγκάθια του ενός δρόμου, αναγνωρίζω τη δυσκολία των δύο δρόμων"(174), acceptance into the paternal *oikos*, *genos* and *patris* necessarily means that Ismail's duality would have to be cancelled in favour of one, the purer, Greek side, of his identity through another, physical death this time. The father prophetically prepares Ismail, imploring him to assume at last the brave attitude that characterises other members of his family : "Όχι, δεν ξέρω με ποιον τρόπο θα πεθάνεις, σου λέω μόνο πως είναι γραφτό να γίνει δύσκολα. Εσύ, να σταθείς γενναίος και να μη φοβηθείς"(174). These last instructions from father to son set the course for reunion in an honourable death, which as the final test of acceptance will have to prove Ismail's bravery, at the same time annihilating the current 'effeminate' status which obstructs the cycle's closure.

¹⁴Liddel Scott *Greek-English Lexicon*.

3. 7. Nostos-Thanatos

D.Maronitis, discussing the notions of *nostos* and death in Seferis' 'Κίχλη' and 'Ο Γυρισμός του Ξενιτεμένου', argues that the world of the dead, with which Ismail in the Homeric tradition communicates, "αποτελεί τον κρίσιμο χώρο απ' όπου αντλεί [κανείς] όχι μόνο το νόστο του αλλά και την ώριμη γνώση"(62). The coinciding biological and historical end of Ismail's life, through the completion of his *nostos*, is according to Maronitis' argument the analogue for a dialogue "του ανθρώπου με τον εαυτό-του, γιατί όπως είπε ο Σικελιανός στον Υμνο του Μεγάλου Νόστου :

το ξέρω· πιο βαθιά κι απ' το πηχτόν αστρόφως,
κρυμμένος σαν αετός,
με περιμένει, εκεί που πια ο θείος αρχίζει ζόφος,
ο πρώτος μου εαυτός...(Maronitis,1984 :16)

According to Maronitis the cycle of life, death and man's relation to the past passes through *nostos*, or better through the harmony of the "αρχέτυπο μοτίβο"(43) *nostos-thanatos* as shown in the *Odyssey* or in folk poetry; therefore, the house, "η παλιά εστία του νόστου", becomes the locus of the completion of *nostos* and the physical death, a "θάνατο όμως που εμπεριέχει το νόστο"(25) and brings about a peaceful and everlasting existence in the world of the dead. The recognition, "αναγνώρισις", is however, a prerequisite for a successful *nostos* because, as, Maronitis argues, "δίχως τη βεβαίωση του αναγνωρισμού, η επιστροφή δεν κυρώνεται. Μόνο με τη σύμπτωση νόστου και αναγνωρισμού ωριμάζει η τελική ανακούφιση"(34).

The Seferis 'Ο γυρισμός του Ξενιτεμένου', the folk song of the same title, and 'Το Τραγούδι του Νεκρού Αδερφού' evolve along the same lines, because their *nostos* revolves around the idea of recognition. When the *anagnorisis* and the *nostos* coincide, as in the folk song 'Ο γυρισμός του Ξενιτεμένου', a happy end ensues. The same is true of 'Το Τραγούδι του Νεκρού Αδερφού', where, despite the fact that the result is death, the completion of *nostos* comes about through the anagnorisis of the mother and the daughter. In Seferis' poem, however, the process of the folk songs is disturbed, because "ο αναγνωρισμός δεν επικυρώνει το νόστο, αλλά ελέγχει τις αποκρουστικές του συνθήκες"(Maronitis 1984:37), as *nostos* drowns in death again. Maronitis suggests that the *xenos* in Seferis' poem refuses the *nostos* proposed by the friend, because the historical moment dominated by the coming of the second world war has turned the "νόστιμη πατρίδα" into a horrible, unrecognizable place: "Η Αθήνα, λοιπόν, του 1938 και ο ξεναγός του Γυρισμού κρύβουν την ιστορική φρίκη: μιλούν υποκριτικά την παραδοσιακή γλώσσα, ενώ είναι ένοχοι της παγκόσμιας και ντόπιας ιστορικής σκηνοθεσίας, η οποία καθιστά το νόστο άκυρο"(43). In this sense, *nostos* requires a double purity, both of the individual and of the place of return, which is the untainted *patris*; any deviation, change or impurity is ground enough to hinder the completion of a successful *nostos*.

Ο *Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* inscribes *nostos* along the traditional lines (as discussed above in relation to Maronitis' reading of Seferis' poems), only to undermine it by the end of the

narrative, as Ismail, having passed through all the necessary stages of purification, completes his *nostos* only to find out that there can never be a return to the original or the archetypal, because there is no such thing as purity of any notion. The ambiguity, as far as the possessive pronoun is concerned, in Ismail's assertion that the father "περίμενε να ξαναγίνω παιδί, να ξαναμπώ στο ίδιο σπίτι, για να με ξανασκεφτεί σαν άτομο, έστω και σαν άτομο που απέτυχε να προεκτείνει τις δικές του επιλογές"(175), can be interpreted as referring to the choices which the father demands of the son.

Appropriating Juliet Mitchell's argument to the necessary circularity of *nostos* as defined by the blood line of the father, one could argue that what Maronitis calls the archetypal motif of *nostos-thanatos* is a manifestation of reciprocal and circular relationships, as expressed through "the various desires that the person has to return to things past, to restore the status quo"(Mitchell,1974:389). Also, since the belief in the immortality of the soul is the societal construct that generates the urge to restore the organism to the purity of its condition prior to animacy, one could also argue that Ismail's *nostos* shows how the boy, whose subjecthood is the concern of patriarchal culture, will acquire the patriarchal social order through the acquisition of the cultural past.

The only tenable position the boy Ismail can occupy, is through taking up his future role in the name of the father. In so doing he will be considered an "άτομο"(175) by symbolically

avenging his father, for whose death the boy has to repay a debt, whilst at the same time redeeming his own humiliating conduct, called "ατίμωση" in the narrative. The symbolic duty becomes that of the law of the male blood line, which is communicated and confounded with the language codes of "την παλιά τελετουργία"(196), whose words Ismail used to contact the dead, and by whose codes he was symbolically baptized Emmanuel. Having been thus named, Ismail, even as a foetus, was assigned a specific place in the father's order, as a son bound for life by debt to the connotations of his name. It is the inescapability from the captivity of the paternal law, even before birth and even after death, that makes Ismail realise that he could not conquer anything outside the father's Law. The final story put forward by the narrative, is the one the dead Ismail would repeat for eternity in the image of an "απών" boy, : there is no single, central, pure state of being for one to strive to return to, and be free in.

The end of all *nostoi* can be allegorically interpreted as referring to the purity of the soul and the importance it is given in the covert promises of a glorious afterlife. As the narrative of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά* states, the redemption of the original sin, which caused the boy Ismail's fall, depends on his *nostos* to remove the stain of his passive acceptance of Islamization, in order for his soul to resume his uniform place among the cult of the dead ancestors. Although Ismail completed his *nostos*, however, he chose to reassert his duality by calling out, before he died, both his mother's and Ibrahim's name. The effects of the

monosemantic demands of acceptance or rejection are thereby destroyed by not allowing the future of his soul to belong to any one paradise or any one hell.

3. 8. Postscript to the fictional life of a historical figure

In the last part of the text, the 'Επιμύθιο', the third-person, omniscient narration is resumed to further strengthen the subversion of the notion of *nostos*, disguising it under the presentation of the multiple versions of Ismail's physical death, which disrupt the monosemantic relation of the terms of the pair *nostos-thanatos*, as defined by the Homeric intertexts.

Although in the end, the narrative's historical truth about Ismail's death is that "ήταν αλήθεια πως δολοφονήθηκε"(184), because of his crypto-Christianity, a fact that gives Ferik's soul back to his Greek origins through a death similar to his father's, it is also the narrative's historical truth that his body was buried in Egypt, where he was mourned by the Egyptian Regent "σαν συγγενικό πρόσωπο" (189), that is, as a relation by blood.

In the coffin, Ismail's face was covered by the traditional Ottoman fez, which "παρέπεμπε[...] στο αίμα"(183), an allusion to both the war and to the paternal blood line to which his soul had a duty to return. The account of the circumstances surrounding the truth about Ismail's death comes from Ibrahim, who as the shadow of an already "απών", as another dead blood-relation, was able to be present during the last hours of Ismail's life. However, when Ibrahim saw Ismail reveal his original identity by showing

the birth-mark on his neck to an old village woman, who immediately recognized him as the long lost second-born son of Fraggios Kampanis Papadakis, he realized that Ismail was guilty of treason, both as a citizen of Egypt and as one of his closest friends. Although the "απών" Ibrahim could not understand the Greek language in which his friend spoke to the woman "γιατί στον δικό του παράδεισο δεν συναντούσε Έλληνες"(192), he was nevertheless able to understand that "εκτός απο την προδοσία, ο φίλος του έμεινε ξένος τόσα χρόνια" (193) in a way that brings to mind the narrator of C. P. Cavafy's 'Μύρης· Αλεξάνδρεια του 340 Μ.Χ.'.

Κ' εξαίφνης με κυρίευσε μια αλλόκοτη
εντύπωση. Αόριστα, αισθάνομουν
σαν νάφευγεν από κοντά μου ο Μύρης·
αισθάνομουν που ενώθη, Χριστιανός,
με τους δικούς του, και που γένομουν
ξένο εγώ, ξένο πολύ· ένοιωθα κιόλα
μια αμφιβολία να με σιμώνει: μήπως κ' είχα γελασθεί
από το πάθος μου, και πάντα του ήμουν ξένος.
(Cavafy1963:76)

Thus, as Ismail "έμεινε πάντοτε ξένος με δική του πρόθεση"(193) in his relationship to Ibrahim, the narrative provides its own truth about Ismail's death, while at the same time also providing the truth about the way in which, for political reasons, the poisoning of Ismail had to be kept secret. The dominant version concerning his death comes from the deliberate, below-deck conversations of naval officers, spoken "τόσο δυνατά, που να μπορεί να τους ακούσει το πλήρωμα"(190), and saying that he had died of wounds received in the stomach during the last battle on the

Lasithi plateau. They add that all rumours about the poisoning were an exaggeration, because he was suffering from an ulcer. As Saleem puts it, "Nobody, no country, has a monopoly of untruth"(326), and this rumour was spread both to Egypt and to mainland Greece by the crews of ships travelling to and from Crete; it satisfied both peoples' superstitious fatalism, because, as the crews said, "ένα μόνο ήταν βέβαιο, όλα τα πλάσματα κάνουν τον κύκλο τους στη γη και μετά σβύνουν· και πως στον κύκλο μια κακή αρχή φέρνει τις πιο πολλές φορές κακό τέλος"(191).

Since Ismail had definitely made a bad start in life, it is understandable that the uniformity of the metaphysical laws universally accepted will not officially grant him peace, but will continue to claim his allegiance even in death. Although Ismail's soul stayed in Crete, his body, despite being buried in Egypt, continued to generate claims of propriety by the opposing camps and the "εφήμερο δίκαιο των βασιλέων"(193), exemplified in the narrative by the information that the Turks of Crete built a cenotaph¹⁵ in Ismail's honour. The cenotaph was built in the yard of their main mosque, on the spot chosen as a burial ground by the Byzantines and the Venetians, and where in previous

¹⁵It is interesting to note that in terms of the cyclic nature of the narrative which runs parallel to the cyclic nature of all nostoi, Ismail's cenotaph was situated right next to the grave of Hassan, who was the Pasha responsible for Ismail's capture. At the time of his capture, Ismail, as a child, had had a vision of the Pasha falling to his death from his horse, and of himself rushing to see his face: "κι αμέσως τον πέταξε πέρα φοβισμένο· το πρόσωπο του κατακτητή έμοιαζε στο δικό του"(19)

centuries "στεκόταν ναός ορθόδοξος ή καθολικός, κατά το δόγμα του ηγεμόνα στη νήσο"(195). Later, however, when the laws of the island were bound to a "διαφορετικό κράτος, σε διαφορετική θρησκεία και σε διαφορετικές ανάγκες"(196), the cemetery was demolished and a school was built in its place. It was then that Ismail's soul came back from the cult of the dead "απόντες", and, dressed in the image of a boy, repeatedly narrated the end of the story of his subversive *nostos* to the schoolchildren, offering it as a subversively eternal, 'unwritten', but fundamental knowledge, which will survive as the stories of his ancestors did "στα παιχνίδια των παιδιών"(79).

He spoke of his burning desire to be reunited with his father's *genos*, because "ήθελε ν' αποτυπωθεί αιώνιος[...] ν' αγγίξει την έσχατη γνώση. Χρόνια τώρα υπέθετε ότι εκεί θα συναντούσε τη χαμένη αθωότητα"(197); of how he could not reach that purity "αν δεν εξομοιωνόταν"(197) and of how he regressed from being an adult to being a child in order to achieve the "αθωότητα [που] χαμογελούσε σαν ο ανευρισκόμενος φύλακας άγγελος της μνήμης"(197). He always ended this by adding that

το μυαλό του έλαμψε ξαφνικά και κατανόησε ότι δεν υπάρχει, ούτε και υπήρξε, κάτι τόσο αθώο ώστε να χαθεί. Αρα, πως δεν υπάρχει, ούτε και ποτέ υπήρξε, επιστροφή. Σηκώθηκε. Πλησίασε την παρασιτιά και τράβηξε την πέτρα από τη χαραμάδα. Φίλησε το γράμμα του Αντώνη, χωρίς να το ξαναδιαβάσει, και το έσκισε κομματάκια. Πήρε μετά το παλιό μαχαίρι και το έμπηξε στη καρδιά του(197).

Ismail, as a subversive "απών", narrates a story that strips *nostos* of all its metaphorical connotations of a great quest for

purity. The "έσχατη γνώση" the boy's narration offers is that "οι νεκροί καθηλώνουν τον χρόνο σ' ένα σημείο, και αυτό είναι η πιο σπουδαία τους επέμβαση στο ταπεινό ρεύμα μιας ζωής"(197), and the past, defined by the myths related to the simple event of death, does not finally "αποτελεί τον κρίσιμο χώρο απ' όπου αντλεί [κανείς] όχι μόνο το νόστο του αλλά και την ώριμη γνώση" as Maronitis argues(1984:62).

Both in 'Κίχλη' and in 'Ο Γυρισμός του Ξενιτεμένου', *nostos* is invalidated because of the returning man's inability to find the fatherland in a state of purity. The failure of the cycle of *nostos*, as both Beaton and Maronitis have argued in their respective discussions of 'Κίχλη' and 'Ο Γυρισμός του Ξενιτεμένου', does not represent a loss of the purity of the original transcendental arché, in whose light "all opposites are reconciled"(Beaton 1991:117), but rather a barring of the vision of that light by the evils of war that tormented Greece at the time of the poems' composition. As Beaton argues, as far as the inconclusive state of the ending of 'Thrush' is concerned, "The poem could have ended [...] with the modern Odysseus reaching his goal of the 'light' which reconciles opposites[...] but it does not. Seferis has too firm a grasp on the realities of human nature and of his time to end the poem on such a note of hope"(1991:117), because to put it in Maronitis' words, in the midst of such "ιστορική φρίκη", the fatherland "δεν μπορεί να είναι και δεν είναι νόστιμη πατρίδα· οι πολιτικές εκτροπές και οι πολεμικές εξαρτήσεις έχουν παραμορφώσει την παραδοσιακή γη. Οι προσφορές και οι προσκλήσεις της είναι πρόκληση σε

συνενοχή[...] που καθιστά το νόστο βέβηλο εγκληματισμό και τον ανακουφιστικό θάνατο αρπάγη συλλογικού φόνου"(1976:24).

In the face of the historical demands for uniformity as a precondition for a collectively recognized *nostos*, Ismail as a boy, and therefore as Emmanuel (the name given to him by his original *genos*), suggests that the idea of *nostos* is invalid, since there is *no return* because there is *no loss* either. In that sense, Ismail\Emmanuel's historical *nostos* becomes yet another story, a fictional narration that subverts and breaks down the logic of identity and non-contradiction that permeates the collective memory of the historical past, one on which the traditional myths of *nostos* depend. Furthermore, since the traditional notion of *nostos* carries with it the notion of a definite and knowable past, the subversive *nostos* proposed by the protagonist in Galanaki's text inevitably touches upon the traditional notion of history as the objective record of the unbroken continuity of the historical narrative as well.

Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά can be said to be a sort of historical novel, whose fictional discourse grants the historically "ex-centric" Ismail Ferik Pasha what the uniformity of historical discourse has denied him. As Umberto Eco has argued in the *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*, historical novels "not only identify in the past the causes of what came later, but also trace the process through which those causes began slowly to produce their effects"(1983:76). It is in the 'Επιμύθιο' of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά*, which alludes

intertextually to Eco's text, that Galanakis' text suggests that the past cannot be unproblematically returned to because as there is more than one version about Ismail's death, there are only truths in the plural, which, combined with the intertextual network of the novel, openly mocks any notions of simple causality or single origin.

Furthermore, in the postscript to the 'historiographic metafiction' (Hutcheon 1988:105-123) of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά*, memory of the past, that is, historical memory, which is supposed to protect human beings from chaos, does not lead to the purity of the miracle of the fundamental truth of an objective historical knowledge, but to the image of a diabolic angel. Similarly, in *Midnight's Children*, Saleem sees "a mythological apparition approaching, the Black Angel"(463), whose black eyes still speak the lies that have tortured his life, whereas in Galanaki's novel Ismail sees the vision of an angel, sustained throughout the narrative as the guardian of memory, with "μαύρα φέδια που τυλίγονταν στους φωτεινούς βοστρύχους"(197). Ismail, starting like J.L. Borges' protagonist in the 'Theme of the Traitor and the Hero', who tries to resolve the causality of an enigma "of a cyclic nature"(104) "in an oppressed and tenacious country [...] or Balkan state"(103), ends up like Saleem, who, in the oppressing circumstances of the divided India sees "the greatest lie of all, cracking now". Both Ismail and Saleem, therefore, finally learn, like Nick in *The Magus*, that it is neither fate nor an archetypal arché that determines the historical space, but chance and random events: individuals come upon

causes hazardingly, they are not assigned to them in "a world where nothing is certain", as John Fowles writes(1977:339). It is in that world that Nick, very much like Ismail and Saleem, being a player in Conchis' constructions of reality for him, attempts to learn to perceive the fictional basis of everything and to distinguish between different orders of fiction which appear as stable structures that have always existed.

The question remains open as to where, if anywhere, one can find a meaning for one's reason for existence. The narrator of *Midnight's Children* says that

unless, of course, there's no such thing as chance[...] we should either-optimistically- get up and cheer, because if everything is planned in advance, then we all have a meaning, and are spared the terror of knowing ourselves to be random, without a *why*; or else, of course, we might -as pessimists- give up here and now, understanding the futility of thought decision action, since nothing we think makes any difference anyway; things will be as they will.(79)

Similarly, in *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά*, the subsequent fate of Ismail clearly responds to the haphazard connections of the circumstances of his capture. The narrator of Galanaki's novel admits that Ismail would not be forced into taking the course of his duality if chance had not provided the opportunity in the first place:

αν Τούρκοι και Αιγύπτιοι δεν έκαιγαν το χωριό. Αν το ιππικό τους μαζευτόταν απ' όλο το οροπέδιο κι έφευγε από το ίδιο πέρασμα[...]Αν ο Χριστός δεν λογάριάζε τα αφάνέρωτα μαζί με τα φανερωμένα κρίματα[...]Αν, τέλος, δαίμονες και

νεράιδες των σπηλαίων εδέονταν μαζί με τους αγίους των εκκλησιών[...]το κλειδί θα μπορούσε να ξαναγυρίσει στην κλειδαριά, ορίζοντας μ' έναν ήπιο μεταλλικό φθόγγο τη ζωή σαν αλληλουχία(13).

Both Saleem's and the fictionalized yet historical Ismail's lives, derive their meaning by being forced into courses of action that have to correspond metaphysically to the reality of the historical circumstances of their birth. Although Ismail's birth generated his duality, and although Saleem's birth made him part of the diverse group of the midnight's children, the notion of where their single duty lies does not derive from the specific historical events, but from the mythology that surrounded them with an inescapable superstition: it is precisely the narratives of that mythology that set out to attribute a chance occurrence to a singular code of cause and effect, so as to annihilate the difference and multiplicity the event generated in favour of a uniform discourse based only on "εκδοχές και εκτιμήσεις"(132).

In the midst of the inexorable historical demands for uniformity, while Saleem devoted his efforts in trying to find *why* his existence was defined in the way it was, Ismail devoted his quest to discovering whose "νομοτέλεια[...]ενώνει την αρετή και την κακία (or any other oppositional pair) σ' ένα μόνο δρόμο, σ' ένα μόνο πρόσωπο"(153). The answer to both men's quests is to be found in the myths their ancestors constructed, and which presented, as Saleem says, a monosemantic reality, barricaded behind "truths which had become more important because they had been sanctified by time"(325). A similar view is put forth in *O Blos*

του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά, in Ismail's realisation of "πόσο μάταια οχύρωσε η φύση το πατημένο σπήλαιο και πόσο σοφά οι παλιοί με τις φαντασίες τους"(18). This observation shows how the memory of what is true is constructed by and defined in myths, which are not literally true but are used nevertheless to exemplify something that must appear as fundamentally true in order to sanctify the strictness of behavioural codes. Saleem says: "morality, judgement, character...it all starts with memory"(211). Ismail's memory of filial duty was activated by the power of the ancestral myth of *nostos* in just the same way. If memory of the past is seen to provide the text for moral judgement, then in consequence, the dead on which it depends for definition, become "πρόσωπα μονάχα που τους λείπει η κίνηση και μετατρέπονται σε αινίγματα"(156). The indefinability of the enigmas of the dead and their past is annihilated when they enter decipherable texts like Borges' riddles of a cyclic nature, or texts in which "ο γραπτός λόγος της ιστορίας"(196) categorizes into uniform groups and destroys their individual multiple character.

In relation to the purity and the wisdom of the past, the message of Ismail's story is close to Saleem's assertion that no metaphysical truth can be derived from any end, of individuals as well as of stories, because by making individual lives part of the collective narratives of myths and histories, human beings, like nations and fictional characters, are reduced to "specks of voiceless dust"(463).

Ismail is able to trace the way back to his past only through the tales that Andonis' letters and Ioannis' stories provide him with, just as Saleem depends on the clues from stories of the past for his narration. Both men create and narrate their own subversive myth, as protagonists and as narrators of their own stories, the specificity of which was forced into the uniformity of the collective future demanded of children fathered by the historical circumstances of emergency in their native country. As History, in both narratives, is no longer presented as "a movement along the files of time [but rather as] a set of myths inhabiting the present"(Carr 1989:11), Ismail's final function in the narrative is that of someone who, having achieved the unthinkable as a child who will never age or die, will eternally narrate the myth of his subversive *nostos* to schoolchildren. Similarly, Saleem, who wrote his tale so that his son will read it, in the exhaustion of his "drained return"(446), finds that his role is "as peripheral a role as that of any redundant oldster: the traditional function, perhaps, of reminiscer, of teller-of-tales"(448).

As both men's tales are accounts of how their personal experience was inextricably connected to history, and as they both refute the metaphysical reality that necessarily returns events and individuals to the name of the purity of a transcendental arché, forcing individuals to mould their present story to the memory-demands of the collective historical past, knowledge of the past is proclaimed as primarily textual and

personal. The position of both Rushdie's and Galanaki's novels is that one can only "know" the past through its textualised remains, since access to the objects, that is the events that have taken place in the past, is achieved only through their traces in texts. Saleem's son will relate to the 'unwritten' parts of his family history through his father's tales, just as the children of a Cretan school will relate to the "άγραφη" history of their *genos* through the tales of the child, Ismail.

Nevertheless, these are the same tales that the reader of *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* and of *Midnight's Children* has been reading and has been relating to a larger intertextual framework. Since the narrative accounts of Ismail's and Saleem's stories are intertextually connected both to the historical discourse of those texts that provided the information about dates, places and names, and to the discourses of the fictional intertexts of all *nostoi*, they define the relation between history and fiction, or between living the present in relation to one's past, as a multiple and an intertextual one, and therefore as a relation constituted in language. It is linguistic codification, therefore, that both privileges and curses Ismail to depiction in fiction as both a contemporary and a historical creature, as both a master and a victim of his times, unable to live or die in peace, and refusing, as Saleem puts it, "to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes"(463).

In this respect, the story of Ismail's life, which was fathered by history, becomes part of a fictional narrative about a

subversive *nostos*, one that will be passed on to children as a refutation of the tendency of history to create connections and causal relationships, and to subjugate events to uniform patterns. To appropriate Hutcheon's comment about Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and in so doing to reaffirm an intertextual relation with *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά*, I believe it is fair to say that Galanaki's novel "investigates how the subject of history is the subject in history, subject to history and to his story"(1988:177).

CHAPTER 4

ΛΑΜΑ : AN ADVENTURE IN LANGUAGE

Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά questioned the reality of a return to the purity of the mysticism of the centre, to an originating arché, that lies at the heart of *nostos* and guarantees a stable identity. Since the only way to know the past and its 'supreme wisdom' is through traces in texts, Galanaki's novel showed how individuals become characters, expected to occupy 'roles' rather than have 'selves', acting them out, no longer in a world of eternal truths, but in a series of constructions, artifices and provisional structures. By exploring how knowledge of the historical world outside the fiction, mediated through language, is inexorably tied to the world of the fiction, the novel exposed how the apparent impersonality of history, which relies upon notions of identity and eternal order, is in fact a very personal utterance about the gendered individual as the site of contradiction.

Moving on from the historical Ishmael Ferik Pasha, who became a character in Galanaki's fiction about his life, we come to the life of the 'historical' word 'ῥαπ', which comes out of a dictionary to personify the main character in Iro Stavraki's novel

Αλμα: της εξαισίας πόρινης φυλλάδα (1989).¹ This chapter will focus on the way the novel, read alongside feminist theories about the indeterminacy of language, exposes the "maleness" of linguistic structures. It will be argued that through its metafictional strategy, the novel subverts the patriarchal hierarchical closure of meaning through a celebration of fictionality produced by the endless relating of words to other words.

The best way to introduce the novel is through the short text, written by the author herself, that can be found on the back of the book:

Αλμα είναι η φανταστική ιστορία μιας λέξης αρχαίας (όαρ). Σύμφωνα με τα λεξικά, η μεγάλη λάμψη, τα νιάτα της, βρίσκονται στον καιρό του ομηρικού έπους. Εκεί εμφανίζεται να δρά (οαρίζω) προς σύζευξη, φιλία και έρωτα.

Από τότε η λέξη έχει πέσει σε αχρηστία.

Στο βιβλίο ιστορείται η περίοδος του γήρατος και της παρακμής της, ως το θάνατό της κάπου στη δεκαετία του 80.

The text, as the blurb implies, is a fiction about the decline and disappearance of the "real" word 'όαρ' that was alive two

¹ Iro Stavraki is a *nom de plume* of Sotiria Stavrakopoulou, who was born in Volos in 1957 and is a lecturer in the philological department of the University of Thessaloniki. She has also published three other novels under her real name, *Ζούμπερα*(1980), *Η Χορδοφάσα και ο κύκλος*(1982)and *Η Λαπαροτομή* (1983).

thousand years ago in the *Iliad*, passed her old age as an entry in the dictionaries and dies in the novel *Αλμα*².

4. 1. The Metafictional Setup

The history therefore of the world, of a word which is no longer in use, and which can only be found in an ancient text (*Iliad*) or in the "Paper graves"(195) of the dictionaries, is recounted through the stories in *Αλμα* in a new "reality" of this fiction, which in turn becomes another "paper grave" for it.

Since no story can exist without a teller, and since *Αλμα* is the story of a word, the word becomes the narrator of its own story, stepping out of the world in the fiction to establish her reality in the world of the fiction that is language itself.

The characters in the narrative are the words themselves, through whose stories of associations a fiction about their creating a fiction is told. As long as the reading process lasts, this fictional world is as real as any, both through the words on

² The word 'δαρ' appears at *Iliad* I 327 : "ἀνδράσι μαρνάμενος δάρων ἕνεκα σφετερώων", and means 'wife' (Liddell and Scott), or "ἡ γυνή ως σύντροφος, σύνευνος" (Dimitrakos). It is important to note that the noun that derives from the word 'δαρ' is 'ἡ δαριστύς' which means "familiar converse, fond discourse" (Liddell and Scott); in its more colloquial form 'το δάρισμα' it means 'φιλική εμπιστευτική συναναστροφή, φιλική συνομιλία ιδίως μεταξύ συζύγων και ερωτευμένων' (Dimitrakos). The implications of the word 'δαριστύς' are discussed at greater length on page 213.

the page (which are materially real) and as worlds created in consciousness through these words.

Through the deployment of narrative reality as a fictional strategy, which separates the text from the conventions of narrative realism rather than from the real world, *Αλμυ* sets itself up as a metafictional narrative. It is a fiction about the making of fiction, in which the narrator's story is caught in a network of words, not of her own making but that of the novelist. The characters also construct through words their own stories and realities, but are themselves verbal constructs, that is words not beings, caught with the reader in the web of language.

In that sense narrator, novelist, characters and finally reader, are the inventors of the text rather than the recorders of the events that happened, and in this self-referential process the reader becomes a fully active participant in this word-game where the players become the roles being played, to explore how language constructs reality, instead of merely reflecting it.

The narrative consists of fifty-two chapters, of which fifty are devoted to the narrator's story until her death. These are presented in first-person past or imperfect tense narration. The penultimate chapter consists of a letter to the publisher, ostensibly from the writer and the last is a list of proper names. This list of names is like an index of character/names with no page references. Since the main story of the narrative is that of the word Oar, the names provided in the index are characters in the narrative as well, but are actually words, with which the

narrating word had associated; the result of these associations is the fictional text of the life story of a word that is *Λλμα*.

As Maria Kakavoulia has argued in her discussion of Melpo Axioti's *Would you like to dance, Maria?*, "a proper name is supposed to introduce the theme of identity and difference by representing a unique character, but analysis [of Axioti's novella] reveals at most the fragility of the act of naming: a proper name is never properly named"(1985:124). A similar effect is achieved in *Λλμα* but through different means. The proper names of all the characters with whom Oar associates herself are listed in an index of names, where they are each given a signified; thus, names are presented in the index as linguistic signs, as signifiers with corresponding signifieds. Although the signified of each name-signifier is fixed in the index, characters can endlessly change names in the narrative and the notion of a stable identity is subverted as each name can no longer be perceived as more than a fleeting trace.

Since proper names have no meaning, many theorists have basically tried to define the properties of the proper name as the referent of a real subject.³ According to psychoanalytic theory, in parent-child relationships, the naming process forces the

³ For a discussion of theories concerning the function of proper names and the act of naming, from a psychoanalytic point of view, see Kristeva's 'The true Real' (1986) and 'Place Names' (1980). For alternative theories of naming see Gardiner (1954) and Kripke (1980), among many others.

child to take a place in the father's order and thus enter socialization for past, present and future. As Réne Major has argued, although we all have a proper name,

this proper name rarely belongs to only one person. We do not choose our own name (at least the name which is on our birth certificate) and yet it identifies us and distinguishes us from everyone else, to the extent that we identify ourselves by our own name. In so far as a proper name may designate several people (even people who do not know each other), it is quite 'improper to single out one person. Insofar as it refers to a real subject, the proper name is a mark related both to a sound (you respond to the sound of your name) and to the letter (you recognise your written name). [...] However, the proper names distinguish one person from another. The proper name is thus a mark without meaning (an unmeaning mark), insignificant and yet remarkable, in both senses of the word. (1985:60)

Naming involves a subject-object relationship, in which the named is the object controlled by the naming subject as only a referent, as a demonstrative of infinite signification through the lack of precision as to the notion of identity. Since the names in the index of *Αλφα* are given a signified, and since the characters constantly take on new names, each signified becomes a new signifier and thus a fiction about them arises from their very existence, serving to separate them from other "real" names, that is names that have a historical truth but no *signifiante*, exposing the fragility of fixing a signified identity, rendering the truth of the name as referent only, a fictional imaginary word construct.

In *Αλφα* the names become the bodies of the characters which change into other names with new life significations. They

take on, or wish for, names of real people like movie stars, or famous literary personalities, religious personae, characters from fictions, fairy tales and popular magazine stories, or even from fellow characters in the same text. Thus, they multiply their identities and their signifieds, writing and shifting their meaning through all the possible definitions that the circumstances of the strategy of the discourse of the text and the reader's participation can give them. Names in *Αλμυρά* therefore, are word constructs applied to linguistic spaces, roles in the linguistic structure of the fiction which, activated by the reader's reference to the index, indicate how the limits of meaning can be revived, transformed, modified, extended, challenged, displaced, not by other spaces, but by a different way of using the process of enunciation of meaning.⁴

In that sense, although the index of names is supposed to offer the reader a stable reference context, it in fact forbids one to stabilize the shifts of context. The reader of *Αλμυρά* comes to realize that the index as an 'inventory' of characters, as a list of names that fixes the reality of the novel, is also an 'invention', a place where fictions are produced, a set of lies;⁵and indeed, as it

⁴In that respect, the fact that Sotiria Stavrakopoulou chose to publish *Αλμυρά* under a *nom de plume* becomes a metafictionally significant strategy that further blurs the limits of the *signifiante* of proper names, as her name has mutated in the same way that the names/characters in her novel do.

⁵The notion of the inventory as invention comes from Patricia Waugh *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious fiction*, (1984:142-146).

turns out, there is not a perfect fit between the names in the text and those listed in the Index.

Fictionalizing the apparent stability of proper names disturbs the entry and socialization into the father's order, and subverts its rules and limits of signification in the *jouissance* of a text about the history of a grammatically feminine word written by a female writer.

The relationship between Oar and the other characters in *Αλμα* is presented as one of extreme intimacy and familiarity. Since the word 'δαρ' in the dictionary means "η Γυνή ως σύντροφος" and in the text means "η γυναίκα πάνω στον έρωτα"(195), the stories of her love affairs with other words make the narrative an "ερωτολογία: περί έρωτος ή περί ερώτων μελέτη, πραγματεία"⁶. The word 'δαρ', however, is not a proper name, but a socially constructed function applicable only to women; thus the fiction about such a word sets itself up as an "ερωτολογία" of a feminine dimension. Moreover, as the word 'δαρ' derives from the verb 'εἶρω' meaning 'to attach', in the way wives acquire that function by being attached to husbands, the metafictional setup of *Αλμα* becomes clearer from the derivative noun 'δαριστύς' meaning 'familiar converse' and 'fond discourse'. The discourse of the wife takes on another connotation, consistent with the wife as a function, since it can also mean 'intercourse'.

⁶All the definitions of words that follow are taken from Liddell and Scott

The 'feminized' erotic element is given a further two-fold dimension through the subtitle of *Αλμα* "της εξαισίας πόρνης φυλλάδα". The word 'φυλλάδα' which, according to the Dimitrakos dictionary, means "ολιγοσέλιδον βιβλίον λαϊκού ή μαθητικού περιεχομένου, ειρωνικόν σχολικόν βιβλίον, βιβλίον ανάξιον λόγου, εφημερίς ανυπόληπτος, ψευδολόγος" combined with the word 'πόρνη', conveys the impression that *Αλμα* is defined by the following characteristics: a short text written by or about a prostitute, who by profession knows that time means money; a text that is user-friendly in so far as it popularises its didactic content about the necessary relationships between words as experienced by a word that behaves like a prostitute; a text that is aware of and celebrates its own textuality; and finally a text that knows its place, and acknowledges its dependent function, like a prostitute or like a wife.

Thus, in keeping with the idea that the word 'όαρ' appears in the narrative in its years of decline and death, the narrator is portayed as an old woman who in her youth has been a prostitute herself but who now is ready to pay vast amounts of money and give generous gifts so as to lure and enjoy the company of twelve-year-old girls and boys. *Αλμα*, therefore, as a fictional account of a word-prostitute's own existence in fiction, becomes a metafictional exposal of fiction-making in general, and it is up to the reader to realize his or her place in that process since as the character Lykiskos says in the novel to his sister "που δίσταζε να εμπορεύεται τον έρωτα[.] το εμπόρευμα δεν έχει ηθικές ιδιότητες· ένα

ωραίο μήλο δε μπορεί να είναι καλό ή κακό· καλός ή κακός είναι ο αγοραστής που θα το φάει”(93).

The erotic relationship of words -and texts- and their users dominates the style of the narrative throughout, with a scandalous lexical as well as sexual exhibitionism. This erotic relationship has been widely used as a metafictional strategy, as can be seen in the following examples: the New Testament commands that to love God is to love His Word made flesh through Jesus; the card found in chewing-gum wrappings which advertises a 1960 film summarises the plot as follows: "ένας νεαρός δικηγόρος που μεταχειρίζεται τις γυναίκες σαν ένα βιβλίο που το διαβάξεις και μετά το πετάς..."⁷; and finally, in *Αλμα* Oar's lover Keraso says "εγώ είμαι το βιβλίο"(27). As Linda Hutcheon argues, through "the erotic or sexual metaphor, as a structure actualized in narcissistic texts[...] reading becomes, like the fiction making that is the author's, an act of possession, of control"(1984:85). The erotic, which forms the metafictional underpinning of *Αλμα*, is what guides the reader through an extremely difficult, almost plotless text. Furthermore, as Oar, in order to exist, has to attach herself to other words/characters, in order for her discourse to be produced through intercourse, the reader, in order to go through the maze of the text, that is in order to be able to function, has to become attached to the text in a way similar to the persistence needed to satisfy an erotic obsession. In that respect, *Αλμα* seemingly demands to function erotically. It is one

⁷ Όι σταρ της τσίχλας'(1991).

of those novels that seeks to lure, tantalize, seduce the reader into a world other than his own. It can only bring itself to life through a variation of the way that Oar manages to stay alive: by forcing the act of reading to become one of imaginative possession, analogous in degree of involvement and active participation to the sexual act. This is the point, Hutcheon argues, "that metafiction of this mode brings to the reader's attention[...]presenting the story of its own coming to life, its own creative processes[...]making the act of reading into one of active 'production', of imagining, interpreting, decoding, ordering, in short of constructing the literary universe through the fictive referents of the words. Reader and writer both share the process of fiction making in *language*"(Hutcheon 1984:86).

The narrative of *Αλμα* consists of the story of Oar which she narrates through the stories of the relationships she had with different characters. These stories are made to correspond, through her own conceptualizations, with the apparent structure of her life and therefore the characters she associates with in her life story are part of the narrator's plot. However, these characters tell their own stories and through their narrations they construct their own plots as well. This process culminates in the final metafictional strategy of the text, when the last character with which Oar associated before her death, takes over the narration and offers her own story towards the end of *Αλμα, της εξαισίας πόρνης φυλλάδα*. making, therefore, the narrations of Oar and all the other characters become only part of the narrated text.

Oar as a word, in fact as all words, needs to attach itself to other words in order to define its identity by asserting her difference. Appropriately, Oar as a character is presented in the narrative as a hedonistic old woman, whose lustful hunting of children is as relentless as the word-hunt (λεξιθηρία) and the word-lust (λεξιλαγνεία) of the text she is part of.

Meeting with another, is the only way for Oar to avoid death, and as such, it forms the backgrounded structure of the erotic relationships between her and the objects of her desire, as narrated in the fiction about her life story. The meeting of two people in *Αλμα* has no value and no meaning if not witnessed or observed by others: "Αν πείς πολλές φορές τη λέξη "ζευγάρι" ζευγάρι, ζευγάρι, ζευγάρι, ζευγάρι, ζευγάρι, ζευγάρι, σου φαίνεται τελικά ακατανόητη κι αδικαιολόγητη[...] γι' αυτό[...] ελάχιστα επιδιώκαμε να μένουμε οι δυό μας και συναντιόμαστε μέσα σε κόσμο, ο έρωτας γινόταν μια ευχάριστη και περίτεχνη κοσμικότητα"(53). Thus the participation of the reader in fiction-making becomes indispensable, since "πρέπει να υπάρχει πάντα κάποιος μάρτυρας σε όλα, και στον έρωτα, γιατί μονάχα τότε είναι αληθινός, αλλιώς σαν όνειρο εξαφανίζεται"(79).

Gatherings or meetings of more than two persons are the ideal loci for creating new or showing old relationships as there are always others there, to bear witness. Oar provides the narrative with a sermon to that effect which she had delivered in the past when she had the name Emmanuella. The definition of

that name⁸ is given as "θηλυκό του Εμμανουήλ, η Χριστός της ομορφιάς" alluding both to Christ and the heroine of the erotic film "Emmanuelle", in praise of association in social gatherings just as the faithful gather in church in celebration of the name of God: "μου άρεσε εκεί παλιότερα να καιω δοκιμή της γοητείας μου και με τη λάμψη μου να σαγηνεύω τα πλήθη ως Χριστός της χάρης και όχι της θρησκείας...γι' αυτό θα λέω πάντα: συνέρχεσθε και εκκλησιάζεσθε, συλλέγεσθε και συνομιλείτε, συμποσιάζεσθε, ώ Συναξούλα και Συμεών, ώ Συραγώ και Πάνο, ώ Σύλλα και Κυριακή, γιατί αλλιώς δεν υπάρχουν. Αυτό είναι το κήρυγμα της Εμμανουέλας"(52). Consistent with the message of the film 'Emmanuelle', which proclaimed that eroticism begins when a third person is present, the religious-style rhetoric of Oar's sermon, which concludes that 'if you do not associate with others you do not exist', is both a praise and a threat, as well as an invocation, which becomes a metafictional comment on the signification of the proper names in it: Συναξούλα: αυτή που ζεί μόνο σε συνάξεις, Συμεών: αυτός που ποτέ δεν είναι μόνος του, Συραγώ: αυτή που επιδιώκει εκρηκτικές συναντήσεις, Πάνος: που αγαπά τις πανηγύρεις, Σύλλας: αυτός που προκαλεί λαϊκές συναθροίσεις and Κυριακή: αυτή που αγαπά τις Κυριακές και τις γιορτές. As Sundays in church should be devoted to the recognition and the praise of the name of the Lord by groups of faithful people, texts are gatherings for words to interact, and thus signify, with the reader's participation, otherwise they cannot exist, just as Συναξούλα, Συμεών, Συραγώ,

⁸ All definitions of proper names are provided by the last chapter of the book 'Πίνακας Ονομάτων' (201-204).

Πάνος, Σύλλας, and Κυριακή would at best be empty referentless signifiers, if it was not for the inference of signification, offered to them as part of the group of words that form this paragraph in the narrative of *Αλμα*.

The plurality that is put forth in this text as a vital precondition for the creation of meaning points to the fact that no text can exist independently of other texts, just as no word can exist independently of other words.

This condition is fully met in *Αλμα* as the narrative is a blend of vast and varied intertextual⁹ and 'intervisual' allusions that span a scale of centuries from ancient Greek texts, personae and mythology to twentieth century fictions, poems, games, magazines and films interspersed with a variety of typographical modes, lists, charts, sketches and illustrations of engravings.¹⁰ Such a visual and textual variety presents the text

⁹Part of the canonical intertextual frame of the text is given in the narrative in what Οαρ and Νεόφυτος call "μαγικούς θησαυρούς": τους Μύθους του Λισώπου, την *Ars Amatoria* του Οβίδιου, το ονειροκριτικό του Αχμέτ, τους μεσαιωνικούς Πορτολάνους, το Συμπόσιο του Πλάτωνα, τους Δειπνοσοφιστές του Αθήναιου, τις ρήσεις του Ηράκλειτου, τα λαϊκά Γιατροσόφια, τις Χίλιες και μιά νύχτες, παλιές ινδιάνικες ιστορίες, τη χρονογραφία του Δωρόθεου, τα έργα του Tolstoi, τον Ρωμανό τον ψαλμωδό, αρχαίες παροιμίες, τον Θεόκριτο"(70).

¹⁰All the illustrations in *Αλμα* are portraits of children and are appropriately chosen from *Children, a pictorial archive from nineteenth-century sources*, (Belanger 1978). The illustrations, which are of a style similar to the

as a meeting place of innumerable elements that constantly defer meaning in the exposition of the realities of fiction-making that *Αλμα* has undertaken.

The self-confessed plurality of this text implicitly and completely denies the notion of originality, since everything depends on being different from everything else for definition, just as man depends on woman as his Other and just as literature written by women is the Other of literature written by men. I do not propose that *Αλμα* is an example of a feminine text as opposed to non-feminine ones, but I would like to argue that its polysemy can stand as a *different* way of contextualization which challenges and subverts the didacticism, the truthfulness and the closure of meaning that texts are traditionally supposed to offer, and constructs this way another discourse which

illustrations that appear in Embirikos' *Αργώ ή Πλούς Λεροστάτου*, serve further to destabilise the meaning-making process. Both texts establish a deferral of meaning by making use of intervisual allusions. By interspersing the written text with images of scenes or characters, which can be read as visual texts, the texts expand their signification infinitely, through triggering off visions that mock the stability of those images of the text developed in consciousness through the reading process. By presenting images in the text which come from other texts to materialize in ways other than the reader's own perceptions of the text being read, both *Αλμα* and *Αργώ* visually set themselves up as part of an ever-expanding intertextual network that resists the closure of meaning that a reader may desire to impose.

proclaims its fictionality as its most important asset and invites everyone to witness and be part of it.

4. 2. Moirai and Kore

Fathers are absent from all the stories of love-making in the narrative except in a story narrated by Oar about her own father, whose advances she escaped, but whose lustful ghost is still haunting her: "Νομίζω μέχρι να πεθάνει, θα ζητά τον έρωτά μου, παρότι γνώρισε πολλές γυναίκες, νομίζω δε θα πεθάνει πριν κάνει έρωτα μαζί μου. Η ψυχή του διεγερμένη και βαριανασαίνοντας θα μ' ακολουθεί"(11). Despite the fact that Oar is herself an old woman persistently going after the love of twelve-year-old girls and boys, to whom she is always 'the mother', her feminine love-making offers do not involve force or violence as in the case of the possessive father, but only free and willing participation in an association and union in love. The mother-child union centres around the Demeter and Persephone myth which implies a constant longing for meeting and reunion as well as the knowledge of eventual parting. In so far as the implications of the myth's narrative spell out a specific fate for the two women, the Demeter and Persephone couple can be seen to function in *Αλμα* through another name, namely as Moira and Kore¹¹. Demeter,

¹¹ The heading 'Moira and Kore' that is used in this analysis is a variation of the Demeter and Persephone myth, as reported by Polites(1871) under the heading 'Demeter and Kore'. This version of the myth has been selected because it shows the incorporation of the ancient myth in the Christian tradition.

as Moira, demands her Kore back from the world of the dead, and upon the satisfaction of that demand rests the fertility of the earth, defining, at the same time, the fate of the daughter as the object of exchange. In the same way, Oar -the old word-metaphorically needs to capture the imagination of the young in exchange for staying alive. Her fate, and the fruition of the text, depends on that attachment, on that union. In that sense, the union of Oar with her child-lovers connotes a time of ongoing creativity, mutual exchange and growth, as suggested by the myth.

The names of Oar's main lovers testify to the importance of the Moira-Kore myth, as they all have names that signify flowers, crops or plants: Keraso: κορίτσι που έχει τις αρετές των κερασιών· κορίτσι που γίνεται δώδεκα χρονών την εποχή των κερασιών, Neofytos: ο μόλις εμφανισθείς στον κόσμο του έρωτα, Lykiskos: που το αίμα του είναι από μύρα, Dalia: σα λουλούδι ιδιότροπο. In addition, throughout the text there are allusions to feasts and mystical processions of twelve-year-old youths, as if for a birthday festival which marks the end of childhood, the beginning of adolescence and "την είσοδο στον λαβύρινθο του έρωτα"(79). The entry into this "υπέρτατη περιπέτεια"(16), marks "Τα εισόδια των παιδιών στη ζωή της Ηδονής"(12) through a ritual of initiation as an allusionary blend of the Annunciation "γιορτή των γενεθλίων και της άνοιξης, της 25ης Μαρτίου"(12) and the Eleusinian mysteries whose magnificent details are unknown just as the text ironically informs us about its own birthday procession: "Σ' αυτόν τον εισαγωγικό περίπατο γίνονται και λέγονται θαυμάσια πράγματα που όσοι τα δοκίμασαν τα

ξέρουν, γιατί φωτογραφίες δεν υπάρχουν"(16). As far as the narrative is concerned, and so that all the allusions to the myth are put in a metafictional perspective, one should not disregard Hecate (the last companion of Oar whom she feared and refused to call aloud), who was the one who witnessed Oar's death and became the sole inheritor of her things and the sole narrator of her story. Appropriately in mythology Hecate was associated with the ghost world; she was an attendant upon Persephone and so in some sense a ruler of the souls of the dead. Her paronym, both in the myth and in the narrative, is "Η Τρίμορφη" for in statues she was often represented in three forms. In the epilogue of *Αλμα*, being in charge of the dead Oar's story, Hecate appears in her own narration with three names: Φιλίτσα, Ερώτιον, and Συγγραφέας.

The myth of Demeter and Persephone forms the basis for a celebration of the union in femininity as a means of creativity and multiple meaning-production that celebrates being together, being part of a group, and being interdependent. This proposition is not presented in opposition to, or as the other of, masculinity, self-sufficiency, and uniqueness; but it is simply put forward as a *different* way of being. The feminine position, as constructed by the narrative of the novel *Αλμα*, is an acknowledgement and a celebration of difference *in association* and as such, in the birthday feasts, it becomes the wish and the anticipation for both girls and boys "που θα προόδευαν σε θηλυκότητα"(13).

4. 3. Films

The cinema, or better the moving picture, plays a crucial role in the narrative as a plane constantly interposed between the level of verbal representation and the level of the "real". The movies present a world within the world of the narrative, not in competition with it, but rather as a variation of it. As "κινηματογράφος" means that which inscribes motion "γραφή της κίνησης", it is the supreme medium for creating powerful illusions of reality through moving pictures. However, in movies the reality of the story told depends on a careful coordination of several elements: script, lighting, costumes, scenery, actors and directors, which themselves depend on each other for the production of an as-real-as-possible illusion of reality. The characters of the movies are played by the actors, who are real people that pretend to be what in reality they are not. Actors therefore, are the only "real" constant in movies, and as such, if successful, they become 'stars', their fame expanding over all the roles they have played. Thus, in *Αλμα* the names of Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Charlie Chaplin, Laurence Olivier, Grace Kelly and so on (9), are signified as "ονόματα ιστορικά", that is as names which will be famous for ever since they made history for their names through their endless role-playing. The characters in *Αλμα* are not fixed or static. They change names, as if changing roles in the stories narrated, just as real actors in the world of the movies. Their stories are 'directed' by the writer but they finally depend on the reader, whose role is to activate them. In

that sense the characters in *Αλμα* -the words- inscribe, and are inscribed, as if in a movie. By becoming "εικόνες και ονόματα των τοίχων, χιλιοειδωμένα μα καινούργια πάντα με τα μάτια κάθε καινούργιου παρτεναίρ"(9) they define movies as a metaphor for moving texts, which combined with the effect of the illustrations discussed before, forever defer the making of meaning.

The motto put forth by Keraso "Εἰς οἰωνός ἀριστος, ἀμύνεσθαι του κινηματογράφου"¹² proclaims the movie theatres in the narrative as the places where people meet and witness the representation of fictional stories depicted on celluloid and projected on large flat screens but which seem as three-dimensional and as real as any. The magnetism of those places which the text describes as "ναό λατρείας του κινηματογράφου και άσυλο βωμό των αναμνήσεων, των αγίων, των νεκρών και του καθορισμένου μέλλοντος"(23) is attested to by an allusion to the Biblical myth of Lot's wife: "στην έξοδο της αίθουσας στεκόταν η μαρμάρινη γυναίκα του Λωτ ως στήλη άλατος με το κεφάλι να κοιτάζει πίσω προς την οθόνη"(23).

The final narrator of *Αλμα* in the epilogue(199) wishes that her λογογράφος will some day become κινηματογράφος and to that end she gives directions about casting, leaving the dramatic action of the pictures that will take over "στη θέση των λέξεων" to the director. As the writer, she keeps the role of Los Angeles for

¹²This motto is a paraphrase of the Homeric tag "Εἰς οἰωνός ἀριστος, ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης".

herself, which on a cinematic level alludes to Hollywood and its movie empire. The text of *Αλμα*, therefore, comes over as a movie script, in which the words are both the actors and the roles being played, their stories directed by the writer and produced by the editor in book form to be seen by the readers whose eyes, like the eyes of Oar and Lykiskos, "σαν κάμερες[...] θώπευαν την εικόνα την μεταβαλλόμενη και ρέουσα"(112). The text as film connotes acting out, role playing and endless signification in the mind of the reader-viewer of stories of the characters despite their having a "καθορισμένο μέλλον" as fixed in the text-script. Words in fiction, like actors, can play infinite numbers and varieties of roles as Oar and Neofytos do, striving to be outside their house and with other people as much as possible. As the reality of a conjugal life in the home makes role-playing and variation impossible, words not participating in the fiction-making process become "σαν κοτούλες που βόσκουν αιώνια σ' ένα κοτέτσι"(53) That is the reason Oar and Neofytos use their house as "το άδυτο μας μπουντουάρ για να ντυνόμαστε και να ξεντυνόμαστε τους ρόλους που θα παίζαμε έξω ως ηθοποιοί συναγωνιστές"(53), ready to become part of the dramatic action of the endless role playing possibilities; their love affair comes to life as a scene in a play watched by others since as Oar says "αν πείς τη λέξη θέατρο χίλιες φορές, [as opposed to the word ζευγάρι] θα γίνει ένα θαύμα, θ' ανοίξει μια σκηνή"(53).

4. 4. Games

Games are activities that demand a degree of role playing since in their rules both the writing and directing of actions is involved as if they were short scripts. In *Αλμα* the games alluded to or invented are never solitary. They always involve two or more people and are part of the festival of birthdays or the symposia rituals adding to the spirit of being together in "φιλοξενίες, κύκλοι, συν, ομό, ραντεβού, συντροφίες, εν, συμφωνίες"(91) which the text proclaims as a vital condition for meaning production in fiction making.

Games are constantly being played in *Αλμα* between Oar and her lovers, between the lovers themselves, between the narrators and the stories, and between the text and its readers. In fact the title of the text *Αλμα* alludes to 'the jump', part of the Olympic games and other athletic contests, as well as to an ancient board game played with nineteen pawns on two hundred and fifty six squares. Also interestingly enough, translating Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, Peter Green equates the game 'ludus latrunculorum' with Halma for which Ovid's advice to women is that "The contest of halma should find her cunning rather than reckless".¹³ In the narrative, the ALMA game, as Oar says, is "το παιχνίδι των ταιριαστών ονομάτων που από δώδεκα χρονών καθόριζε τη μοίρα μου στον έρωτα. Πρόκειται για τα γράμματα Α.Λ.Μ.Α. που είναι τα αρχικά των λέξεων Αγαπώ, Λατρεύω, Μισώ, Αδιαφορώ. Η λέξη ΑΛΜΑ αφού

¹³*Ars Amatoria* , Book 3:357-360.

περιέχει μια βασική κλίμακα ερωτικών συναισθημάτων αποτελεί το μέτρο σύγκρισης ανάμεσα σε δυο ονόματα. Τα κοινά γράμματα στα ονόματα των δύο εραστών έχουν ιδιαίτερη σημασία για τον έρωτα τους, παρόμοια με το μάθημα της μαργαρίτας που είναι όμως παιχνίδι απλούστερο και χειρωνακτικό"(9-10).The game of ALMA, therefore, determines the future existence of the relationship of two lovers in this fiction, through its only rule which depends on the amount of phonetically common letters in their proper names.

Oar plays the ALMA game with three of her four main lovers and tries to predict the outcome or the course of their relationship. Keraso, Neofytos and Dalia accept, but Lykiskos refuses because "δεν ήθελε να φανερώσει τα αισθήματά του"(98). With Keraso the prediction is dire: "ανάμεσα στο δικό μου όνομα [Oar says] και στο όνομα Κερασώ υπάρχουν τρία κοινά γράμματα Κερασώ. Αλλάμονο. Τα τρία κοινά αντιστοιχούν στο γράμμα Μ της λέξης ΑΛΜΑ, δηλαδή στο Μισώ. Αυτή η σύμπτωση δεν προοιωνίζει τίποτα καλό για τη σχέση μας"(10). With Neofytos the future seems perfect "Δεν αποφύγαμε να κάνουμε και το παιχνίδι ΑΛΜΑ. Απ' όπου βγήκε ότι το όνομα Νεόφυτος έχει ένα κοινό γράμμα με το δικό μου πού αντιστοιχεί στο Α(γαπώ) της λέξης ΑΛΜΑ. Έτσι από το αρμονικό μας ζευγάρι γεννήθηκε η θαυμαστή σχέση σ υ μ π α ι γ ν ί α (ο ένας παίζει μαζί με τον άλλον μιά ολόκληρη ζωή)"(46) as it is with Dalia "τα ονόματά μας αποδείχτηκε πως αγαπιούνται"(175). Even Lykiskos, who refused to play ALMA with Oar, finally believed in its magic power and to her surprise played it with Θέμις "το αποτέλεσμα μου το έδειξε θριαμβευτικά, Λυκίσκος-Θέμις=ΑΛΜΑ(Λατρεύω)"(101). The magic power of the game, to determine or predict the future of an association,

is subverted, however, in the narrative since all the lovers finally leave Oar and pursue other lives and love affairs and she is forced to die alone precisely from the lack of opportunities for association.

The ALMA game is a construct of the text and, as such, part of its fiction, with rules as arbitrary as those of any 'real' game. The possibility of its determining or fixing the meaning of word associations is refuted in this metafictional narrative, and it renders *Αλμα* a linguistic game between the reader and the text, another adventure in the infinite possibilities of signification in language.

4. 5. Oar's Life in Five Acts

In a form of autobiographical fiction, when she is already of an advanced age, Oar tells her own life story which starts *in medias res*, as the first chapter "Πώς η Κερασώ διαδέχτηκε τη Πεγγίνα στο κρεβάτι του έρωτα" suggests. Her story, which basically unfolds along the same pattern, that of a love affair, circulates among characters and attaches itself to one or more of them at a time. The four main periods of the latter part of her life, namely her association with four twelve-year-old characters [in order of appearance, Keraso, Neofytos, Lykiskos and Dalia], interspersed with numerous flashback narrations as well as stories narrated by other secondary characters, are telescoped into the part of the text that Oar recounts. However, her life story has not been told in its entirety until after her death, when another narrator,

Hecate, takes over, making the narrating position unreliable, though one cannot be sure in what way or to what degree.

The style throughout the narrative is consistently exhibitionistic, both in terms of the 'scandalous' sexual content of the stories told, and on the lexical level that these stories maintain through a complex web of illustrations, puns, lexical rarities, onomatopoeic word games, typographical variations and constant, and often ironic, intertextual or interlexical allusions.

For the economy of the present discussion, the metafictional account of the life of the word Oar will be discussed as if it were a play in five acts, each pointing to an affair with a character: the era of Keraso (pp.9-40), the era of Neofytos (pp.41-90), the era of Lykiskos (pp.91-128), the era of Dalia (pp.140-175) and the era of Hecate (pp.176-197). Although this structural division entails a sequential reading of the text from beginning to end, it does not mean to imply any narrative development as such, nor to signify important changes or developments in Oar's character, since each era is scripted along the same love found and love lost pattern. The era of Hecate, which comes immediately before and continues after Oar's death, does not involve any kind of love affair, but is the part of the text which testifies to Oar's death, completing her life story and bringing forth all the metafictional threads of the erotic woven into the narrative.

ACT I: The Era of Keraso

Oar, an old woman at the time the narrative begins, is privy to the secrets of the mystical birthday feast rituals to which she was initiated by her mother, she in the role of Persephone and her mother in the role of Demeter. In an account of memories from her *enfance*, Oar tells of the day of her own birthday feast "ημέρα αντάμωσης και χωρισμού"(18) when her mother exercised her magic regal arts, mixing the ingredients in a large pot, standing next to it "σαν τη συγγραφέα δίπλα στο γραπτό της"(20) and singing the cryptic ode. This ode could only be passed from woman to woman "τη φανερώνουν μόνο πεθαίνοντας οι γυναίκες στις αγαπημένες τους"(20). In order to 'write' the magic of the ritual, a love affair is essential, and therefore when Oar and her mother part "η μάνα μου εγκαταλείφτηκε στις αναμνήσεις της σα Δήμητρα του μύθου που ποθεί την Περσεφόνη κόρη της κι αναζητούσε στις συνοδούς νέων την εικόνα μου για συγγενή και σύζυγο"(20). As this story is very close to Oar's own story and very conveniently based on the myth, it can leave the reader reassured of having made contact with the symbolism involved, but as it is part of Oar's narration this reassurance is denied by her own admission that "Αυτό βέβαια είναι μια φανταστική ιστορία"(20) and its idealistic symbolism is subverted by the 'true' version: "η αλήθεια είναι πως η μάνα μου[...] με έντυσε και με έβαψε σαν κυρία του πεζοδρομίου κι έτσι στολισμένη με φωτογράφησε. Η φωτογραφία δημοσιεύτηκε σε πολλά περιοδικά και ήταν η αρχή για μια καλή καριέρα. Σ' αυτήν τα χρωστάω όλα"(20). Oar owes her prostitution to

her mother as she, the writer of her own fiction, truthfully testifies.

Oar is the writer of the text about her life and to this task she has devoted all her energy. That is why she was upset by the unwillingness of Keraso to become part of the noble art of fiction writing, when "αντί να ιχνογραφεί μαζί μου και να πλάθει λέξεις" using "τη γλώσσα των λεπτών ανθρώπων"(25) she went dressed in very bad taste to meet salesgirls and factory workers at bus stops humming coarse rock tunes. The fear of losing Keraso to someone else made Oar consider living constantly in the style of Nabokov's *Lolita*: "ίσως ήταν προτιμώτερο να ταξιδεύουμε μαζί συνέχεια δίχως τέλος όπως ο Χουμπέρτος κι η Λολίτα"(26). As Humbert Humbert found out, there is no way to keep someone who wants to go except by briefly controlling them as characters in the story you are writing. Thus Keraso who, urged by Oar to read some books, defiantly claims "εγώ είμαι το βιβλίο"(27) becomes a part of Oar's narration, her photographs, as memories of her, left to the vengeful mania of Oar who calmed down only by "βιάζοντάς τες με τα μάτια ή με το πέος του ζηλόφθονου στυλού" until, fictionalizing their relationship, she was able to see that "Πράγματι ήταν ένα βιβλίο που σου υποσχόταν τα πάντα"(27).

The initiation of the word-lovers of Oar into a life of endless pleasure in *Αλμα* marks their entrance into a fiction-in-the-making which contains them and is made of them as all texts are made up of words. It is in texts that words will exist interdependently as a "σχοινοσυντροφιά"(22) their erotic

relationships forever unbroken, always to be read in texts as those "πανίσχυρους ερωτικούς δεσμούς παραμυθιών· ο Γιάννης και η Ανδραβίδα, Η Πούλια κι ο Αυγερινός, Γιαννάκης και Μαργιό, Ηλιος και Σιμιγδαλένιος, η Χρυσάφεια και η Ασημένια..."(22) or as the "συμπλεκτικά ζευγαρωμένα πρόσωπα της αρχαιότητας· Ρόθιος και Γλαύκη, Χαιρέας και Ναυβάτης, Πανόπη και Ευθύβολος, Γαλάτεια και Μένανδρος"(22).

The younger girls who are called by the pagan name 'Δρακούλα' which means, according to the text, "το αβάπτιστο κορίτσι" or "η μη μετέχουσα στον πολιτισμό στη νόμιμη κοινωνική ζωή", are given to fortunate old women in the birthday feasts, and are thus socialised, entering civilization under a name that has a Christian dimension, namely as 'Αντιδώρα'. This name, which in the novel means "το κορίτσι που δίνεται ως αντίδωρο σε κάποια πιστή της Ομορφιάς", derives from the verb 'αντιδωρέομαι' meaning 'to present in return', and connotes the Christian "αντίδωρο", the piece of bread given to the faithful after communion. During the celebrations, some old women, assuming the roles of mature and respected poets such as Sappho and Alkaios, choose their new word-brides, "πρώτο υλικό της ποίησης τους"(16), to have as players, partners, and students. The allusion to the canonical value of the two ancient poets is soon subverted through the gifts that the writers and the directors of the birthday feast offered to the most promising couple, "μολρας-κόρης". The winners were given ornaments "καλλυντικά, κοσμήματα, μαγιώ, φορέματα, συμβόλαια για επιδείξεις και διαφημίσεις, ταξιδάκια προς Γαλλία" as a first step towards a promising career, as well as "περιοδικά της γυναικείας μόδας, τη Γυναίκα, Cosmopolitan, την Elle, τη Vogue, Marie Claire

και Seventeen"(17) which although offered by the poets, surely do not use the language of 'the delicate people'.

The references to popular fashion and pornographic magazines and to comic books, given side by side with allusions to contemporary and ancient literary texts and writers, refutes the idea of the existence of a "Γλώσσα των λεπτών ανθρώπων" and annuls the distinction between serious and popular fiction or good and bad literature. Since all narratives, irrespective of genre, are made up of words and words belong to language, classifications such as "η γλώσσα του θεού, του διαβόλου, των ανθρώπων, του πόθου, των παιδιών, των διαφημιστών και των ανθρώπων της μόδας"(30) are exposed in *Αλμα* as constructions and means to specify meaning and unfold the metaphorical function of words which is as arbitrary as "το νήμα των ονείρων που σημαίνει δρόμο σύμφωνα με τους λαϊκούς ονειροκρίτες"(30). The context in which words exist controls their signification, and since there are infinite contexts there can be endless signification, as the narrative exposes through the names of precious stones and jewels. Jewels can be very expensive, but they can also be fake, equally "πανέμορφα σε εμφάνιση και σε ψυχή"(30). The names of jewels and precious stones like "ρουμπίνι, ζαφείρι, φλουρί, μενταγιόν, διαμάντι" which belong "στη γλώσσα των ανθρώπων", are in themselves empty signifiers. However, when they are found in context they acquire several signifieds: "στη γλώσσα του πόθου" they signify strongly wished-for ornaments "περιδέραιο από διαμάντια Βιρμανίας"; "στη γλώσσα των παιδιών" they signify character attributes: "αμέθυστος σημαίνει ειλικρίνεια, διαμάντι ευδαιμονία, σμαράγδι σύνεση,

ζαφείρι σοφία"; and in the language of advertising or fashion the same word-jewels seem to have special properties that signify an appropriate way of use: "το μαργαριτάρι φοριέται τη Δευτέρα, το Ρουμπίνι την Τρίτη" and so on.

In the same way that the significance of apparitions in dreams is constructed depending on the surrounding context, people, in *Αλμα*, are compared to animals not because of specific bodily features, but according to their function in the narrative: Keraso is like a hare and Neofytos is like a bird and therefore, both because of that context, and through it, Oar's ideas of conquest towards those children earn her the assimilation with "ένα μεγάλο γέρο γάτο" and the name "μαμά-κα(t) (31). However, the significance of that name of Oar is by no means final or fixed, because the kinds of love affairs that the character and the word Oar can have with others, even if they are solely described by animal similes, open up fresh narrative possibilities "όπως στα κόμικς και στα βίντεο και στα περιοδικά" with "ζώα παλαιολιθικά ή ζώα που θα φανούν στο μέλλον"(31).

In this context of endless signification and indeterminacy of meaning, the intertextual allusions interspersed with the linguistic blend of canonical and popular discourses, are always used as part of the linguistic game in a playful and ironic way in *Αλμα*. For instance, Oar ironically alludes to Plato's *Republic*, talking about those girls, the "γυφτοπούλες[...] προπετείς, αλωμένες και μάλλον βρώμικες ονειρεμένες", who "θα είχαν την πρώτη θέση σε μιά δική μου Πολιτεία"(12); or even better, Oar, trying to ease the

impatience of an unwelcome male lover while he waits in the sitting room of a young woman, reads him "δύο παραγράφους από το έργο του Απολιναίρ που αναφέρονταν σε αγόρια με άσπρους πισινούς ωσάν το μάρμαρο",¹⁴ to which he replies with riddles like "χίλιοι μύριοι καλογέροι σε ένα ράσο τυλιγμένοι που σημαίνει το όνομα του ρόιδου κι όχι τίποτα άλλο που να έχει σχέση με τον Eco", the intentional confusion of the words 'ρόιδο' and 'ρόδο' referring of course to semiotic mystery structure of *The Name of the Rose*. Similarly, the riddle/question "γιατί κανείς ποτέ δεν θα ξαναγαπήσει; γιατί αγάπησε για όλους ο Wim Wenders στα 'Φτερά του έρωτα'" alludes to the film 'Wings of Desire'.

The possibility for the reader to infer allusions to real and stable intertextual references is further subverted by the undoing of the mystery in riddles as in "γιατί οι χωροφύλακες φορούνε παντελόνια με τιράντες; προφανώς για να μην τους πέφτουν". This is presented side by side with the 'real' fairytale story of Yiannis, "που σκότωσε με μια εφτά μύγες, μα οι άλλοι νόμιζαν πως ήταν οι εφτά δράκοι και τον κάναν άρχοντα"(15), so as to point out that distinctions between reality and fiction are always elusive, and to show how the signifieds of the words in the texts can endlessly shift, depending on the context of the word play. Thus, the novel sets itself up as primarily a world of words, self-consciously a replacement rather than an appurtenance of the 'real' world.

¹⁴ The allusion is to Apollinaire's scandalous novel *Les Onze Mille Verges* (1907).

Oar as a woman, feels that the image of her experiences has been constructed by men, defined and described in their fictions, leaving to her only their margins on which to inscribe her own account. Thus Oar's past life, described as a "προσωπική χρονογραφία", can be found "μοιρασμένη στα λευκά των περιοδικών, με γράμματα να ακροβατούν στα χείλη των σελίδων"(32). Magazine narratives have mirrored models for women urging them to be like "τα αστρικά φαντάσματα των βιτρινών", endlessly providing names of fashion accessories and their appropriate uses, making them anxious to see their body inscribed in ways as similar as possible to the images provided in those narratives. For these girls, or rather these images of women, a poet 'of the lustful life' wrote a poem "για τα κορίτσια σα χρωματιστό γυαλί πανέμορφα, για τα πολύτροπα σα ζάρια παιχνιδιών, για τα ευγενικά σαν κληρονομημένη απο τον δέκατον αιώνα συνταγή για κρέμα ομορφιάς"(33) which reminds one of the woman-as-object career that Oar's mother -as Moira- made her pursue through fashion modelling, that is through a kind of visual prostitution of her image to the eyes of hungry, anonymous beholders.

However, Oar is eager to meet other women whose beauty has yet to be defined in a narrative and thus when "ο μεγάλος καθρέφτης κομπιούτερ της Δάφνης (αυτή που υπήρχε και θα υπάρχει), εμφάνισε νέα σαν άγραφο φύλλο λευκή στις μεθόριες περιοχές καλλονών, τη Λευκή (η παρθένα)" she set out on a long voyage to find her and "άξιζε τον κόπο η συνάντηση"(32) as that story became part of the fiction that she now narrates in her own way. Oar believes that

words cannot offer a realistic representation of the everyday world, and so she writes her life story in a deliberately non-realistic way.

In a very strongly ironic tone, the allegedly realistic mode of writing is always related in *Αλμα* to men's writing. The stories of the love affairs that Oar had are always narrated through shifting metaphorical signifiers, but when these stories involve her lovers leaving her for a man, detailed realism ironically takes over the narration. For example, when Keraso leaves Oar for a fisherman and goes with him to America asking for Oar's forgiveness because she is at last able to satisfy a long standing wish, "ήθελα πάντα να βρώ κάποιον που να κατουράει όρθιος.Και να τον βλέπω να κατουράει τη γή της Αμερικής"(34),¹⁵ Oar starts narrating a similar experience of her own, on which she embarked "στην αρχή από περιέργεια, ύστερα για αυτοτιμωρία(36), calling on the spirit of an actress to protect her through it: "Α! Μπεατρίς Ντάλ όσο μιλώ...νάσαι κοντά μου να ξορκίζεις το κακό"(36).¹⁶ This story is given in two versions, the poetic one in Oar's style, and the realistic one in the style demanded by her old male lover.

¹⁵America as the land of opportunity is always referred to in the narrative as the place where socially-constructed dreams come true, and where career achievements matter the most, especially in relation to Hollywood's film-making empire, which thrives on stereotypical representations of women and femininity.

¹⁶Beatrice Dalle is in fact the heroine of Jean Jacques Beineix's film "Betty Blue" in which she plays the role of the girlfriend of a writer who finds success through her help and encouragement.

Their difference of style is summarized in a dialogue they had about the nature of love, in which the man said that "ο έρωτας είναι η τριβή δύο επιδερμίδων" and she replied in poetic words that "είναι ο ασπασμός των αγγέλων προς τα άστρα". In acting out what he called love-making Oar pretended to enjoy it and in between falling asleep and waking he told her that "πρέπει κάποτε να περιγράψω ρεαλιστικά αυτά που γίνονταν ανάμεσά μας"(36), meaning to describe the ritualistic sexual act accurately and in full detail. Oar admits that she could never do it while he was alive, but now that he is dead she decides to go ahead; she narrates by putting in parentheses the whole loathsome realistic description of the love making, which seemed as if it was taking place in a "πορνοταινία, δίχως αίσθημα καθόλου και με μια (έν)ταση αηδίας κι όχι ηδονής"(37), knowing "πως όλη αυτή η περιγραφή θα είναι σαν μύγα ποταπότητας στο γάλα της λευκής ή έστω ρόζ διήγησής μου"(36). This kind of pornographic narration, Oar explains, can be used to arouse and titillate and she often used it thus, but realism is not her style and although that man had an insignificant name beginning with K, the importance of the story lies in that "από τη σχέση του μαζί μου απέκτησε ένα όνομα σημαντικό". In fact she gave him the rather ridiculous name Πατάπιος, which appropriately signifies in the narrative a "πορνόγερος, χυδαίος γέρος".

One should not forget that the love stories which make up the narrative about Oar's life are not there to give a realistic insight into private acts. Their objective is to explore the mechanisms of fiction writing, in the way a woman chooses to write about the life of a dead word and its relationships of

"σύζευξη, φιλία, έρωτα" with other words. This 'feminine' way is not, however, reserved for women only, for as in the narrative of the famous myth, although the roles of the initiators -Demeter and Persephone- were of a mother and daughter, the mysteries and their secret rituals were open to absolutely everyone who spoke Greek and was not guilty of murder.

ACT II: The Era of Neofytos

The era of Keraso establishes the fact that for Oar there can be no life outside a relationship; life without love is an inexorable state of captivity where loneliness destroys everything beautiful. Thus, when Keraso leaves, Oar feels that "το σώμα μου κατείχε ένα χώρο σκοτεινό που εκτόπιζε αέναα τον έξω χώρο"(41). For the story to go on, Oar needs to stop being alone "για να ελευθερωθώ θα έπρεπε να αιχμαλωτιστώ από καινούργιο πρόσωπο, να αφήσω να με υπνωτίσει ένα άλλο υποκείμενο από την αρχή"(41). In order to find the characters through whom she will be able to continue her life story, she looks randomly at films and at the glossy photographs of magazines: "προτιμώ να ψάχνω σε ταινίες μορφές έστω μακιγιαρισμένες και χαμένες μέσα σε πέπλα"; although as she later ironically discloses, "έχω και τα βιβλία της ιστορίας που δεν τα ψάχνω πολύ όπως ο ποιητής Καβάφης όταν βρήκε εκεί τον Καισαρίωνα"(183). Neofytos becomes Oar's next partner, or as she calls him the next player, through a game "σαν εικόνα περιοδικού που παίζοντας σχημάτισα, μαυρίζοντας με το μολύβι μου τετραγωνάκια με τελίτσες"(41). The shape of this new person, and his relationship to Oar, based on similes earlier inscribed by Keraso, comes alive

as a cartoon character, in the same way as Caesarion, a historical figure, had done for Cavafy: "το σχήμα που μου βγήκε και που μεγεθύνθηκε αφάνταστα μπροστά στα μάτια μου ήταν ο Γούντυ Γουντπέκερ στα νύχια μιας γάτας"(41).

Neofytos (ο μόλις εμφανισθείς στον κόσμο του έρωτα) is a son of Oar. The parameters of their love affair are set through the metaphor of a story narrated by Oar to Φύλλις (που σκιρτάει σαν φύλλο σε κάθε ερωτικό άκουσμα). This story, entitled 'the fairytale of loneliness', indirectly alludes to the Demeter-Kore myth: Oar is used and abused by men as she travels through villages and dark forests, while time stands still; it is not until she finds a baby lost in the woods, takes it with her, and names it Ζωή και Ρεαλίτσα (η πραγματική) that time starts to move forward again.

Oar resorts to poetry to lure Neofytos, "κατέφυγα στην αλεξίπονη σκιά της ποίησης μα όχι της καινούργιας, αλλά της αρχαίας, της αμφίβολης και δύσκολης για τους πολλούς" by giving him Sappho's poem as a present, to decipher and interpret. Dialogue only begins "σαν ήχος και αντήχηση" when he replies with another Sappho poem and thus enters her life story through the "χαρούμενο κόσμο των ήχων"(44).

Neofytos' image is appropriate to the status of the metaphor of the cartoon character associated with him. His virginity, caricatured though the elaborate ornamentation of his "βαλσαμωμένη ομορφιά"(44), makes him look like "μια κείμενη παρθένα που τη ντύνουν νύφη ή σαν άνθος εμπορίου περιτυλιγμένο με φενάκη-ζελοφάν"(43), his body at the mercy of the word-game "συμπαιγνία"

which Oar initiates. Furthermore, as a cartoon character, Neofytos adds to the ironic treatment of intertextual references in *Αλμα*, since in the narrative he is obsessed with both the 'great' secular and patristic canonical texts. Even in his seductive talk to Melina [Oar's rival, the granddaughter of the oldest woman, the other woman in every love story], Neofytos uses Homeric-sounding epithets: "μαρμαρόφεγγή μου, δαμάλα θρώσκουσα, ιοπλόκαμη και αγησίχορη"(47). Thus, the relationship of *Αλμα* with ancient texts as 'sources' becomes clearly ironic, as is implied earlier in the narrative by a description of a symposium "επί βασιλείας Κερασώς", the details of which allude to Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*; the text states: "γιά τέτοιες πανδαισίες και λογόδειπνους κι επικύκλειες καλλιτεχνίες βρίσκουμε σε αρχαία κείμενα χωρίς επικαιρότητα"(24).

In contrast to Neofytos' choice of allusive language codes, Oar and Melina create their own private signification through a different use of culturally constructed codes and images in cipher, and thus subvert the notion of decipherability of meaning through references or allusions to a given source. For example, when the two women want to communicate their meeting place they say "Σταν και Ολιβερ σημαίνει θα συναντηθούμε στον κινηματογράφο. Ποιος είναι ο καλύτερος φίλος του βασιλιά σημαίνει θα συναντηθούμε σε εστιατόριο. Ροβινσών Κρούσος σημαίνει θα συναντηθούμε σε ένα πάρκο"(49). The encoding of each cryptic phrase with a particular signification is arbitrarily assigned by a whimsical momentary choice, which masks its arbitrariness through a supposedly and obviously significant reasoning: "Με ένα κατοστάρικο θα καθαρίσω

όποιον πείς σημαίνει θα συναντηθούμε στο σταθμό γιατί κάποιος λεηλάτης που άραζε εκεί μας το έλεγε πάντα όταν μας έβλεπε, συγχρόνως κραδαίνοντας τον πού-σε-σφάζει-καί-πού-σε-πονεί σουγιά του" οι "Paco Rabanne σημαίνει θα συναντηθούμε σε ξενοδοχείο από μιά διαφήμιση της Τηλεόρασης (κάποιος βρίσκεται μόνος σε ξενοδοχείο και νοσταλγεί το άρωμά του"(49).

Love affairs provide Oar with an intense, life-saving pleasure, as the nightingale did for the emperor, as Oar suggests in her allusion to the famous fairytale. In keeping with the rituals of the Moira-Kore myth, love-making is a quasi-religious experience delineated by the sermon of Emmanuella(52). It involves role-playing witnessed by the public, scripted along the lines of the Christians' love of God as depicted in church. It is the way in which on a metafictional level the "υπέρ-πράγματα της μαγικής ζωής[...]τα ταχυδακτυλουργικά, το να τρίβεις τις δυο παλάμες για ζέστη, να χτυπάς παλαμάκια, να κάνεις το σταυρό σου, να κάνεις όπα με τα τρία δάχτυλα, να γράφεις, να χαϊδεύεις"(54) exist in texts through words. The intertextual allusions in *Αλμα*, and especially those brought about by Oar's narrations, become part of her prayers in her anxiety to stay alive to write her life story. Eroticizing the purity of the Christian love of God, and determined to use everything available to her, "δεν θα πέθαινα πριν να ξοδέψω και την τελευταία προσευχή μου όπως ένας ποιητής δικός μας που έζησε όσο για να ξοδέψει την τελευταία του δεκάρα από την πατρική κληρονομιά"(57), Oar prays to the Father, asserting her faith in him like a school-girl to the schoolmaster, until the three-named and three-faced angel of the Christian motto "Πίστη, Αγάπη, Ελπίδα"(58) comes

upon her ironically not for copulation, but for masturbation:
"περιμένοντας όταν θα είμαι απόλυτα χαλαρή και ολομόναχη, άγλωσση και αδρανής, αόματη κι αόρατη, αβυσσαλέα ερωτευμένη, να πληρώσει το κενό"(59).

The invocation of the Father's spirit to come and fill the void with its language in Oar's text, which she as "language-less" cannot provide for, involves the two most important declarations of faith of the Christian religion, "The Creed" and "The Lord's Prayer", in the form of prayer-wishes, to whose lines Oar adds her own endings, thus subverting their metaphysical power:

Πιστεύω εις ένα θεόν, πατέρα παντοκράτορα, ποιητήν ουρανού και γής, ορατών τε πάντων και αοράτων, τον διευθυντή του σχολείου.

Και εις ένα κύριον, Ιησούν Χριστόν, τον υιόν του θεού, τον μονογενή, τον εκ του πατρός γεννηθέντα προ πάντων των αιώνων, τον δάσκαλο.

Φως εκ φωτός, θεόν αληθινόν εκ θεού αληθινού, γεννηθέντα ου ποιηθέντα, ομοούσιον τω πατρί δι' ου τα πάντα εγένετο, τον όμορφο γιό του δάσκαλου.

Τον δι' ημας τους ανθρώπους και διά την ημετέραν σωτηρίαν, κατελθόντα εκ των ουρανών και σαρκωθέντα εκ πνεύματος αγίου και Μαρίας της παρθένου και ενανθρωπήσαντα, τον δήμαρχο.

Σταυρωθέντα τε υπερ ημών επί Ποντίου Πιλάτου και παθόντα και ταφέντα, τον πατέρα.

Και αναστάντα την τρίτην ημέρα κατά τας γραφάς στους εφιάλτες μας και ανελθόντα εις τους ουραμούς και καθεζόμενον εκ δεξιών του πατρός.

Και πάλιν ερχόμενον μετά δόξης κρίναι ζώντας και νεκρούς, ου της βασιλείας ουκ έσται τέλος, του αστυνόμου.

Και εις το πνεύμα το άγιον, το κύριον, το ζωοποιόν, το εκ του Πατρός εκπορευόμενον, το συν πατρί και υιώ συμπροσκυνούμενον και συνδοξαζόμενον, το λαλήσαν διά των προφητών, το γλυκό και βάσανο χρήμα.

Και εις μίαν, αγίαν καθολικήν και αποστολικήν εκκλησίαν, ομολογώ εν βάπτισμα εις άφεσιν αμαρτιών, προσδοκώ ανάστασιν νεκρών και ζωήν του μέλλοντος αιώνος, την αγία λογοτεχνία.

— Πάτερ ημών ο εν τοις ουρανοίς, αγιαστήτω το όνομά σου, ελθέτω η βασιλεία σου, γεννηθήτω το θέλημα σου ως εν ουρανώ και επί της γής, ώ προαγωγέ.

Τον άρτον ημών τον επιούσιον δός ημίν σήμερον καί άφες
ημίν τα οφειλήματα ημών ως καί ημείς αφίεμεν τοίς
οφειλέταις ημών, *πελάτη πορνοκόπε.*
Και μη εισενέγκοις ημάς εις πειρασμόν αλλά ρήσαι ημάς από
του πονηρού, *κορίτσι δωδεκάχρονο.*
— Βασιλεύ ουράνιε, παράκλητε το πνεύμα της αληθείας, *ώ*
έρωτα, ώ πάναγνο φλέρντ ο πανταχού παρών και τα πάντα
πληρών, ο παντομνήμων νούς ελθέ και σκήνωσον εν ημίν,
φωτιά λυτρωτική. (58, *my italics*)

These prayers, treated by Oar merely as texts made up of words, coexist in erotic association with Oar's own words and are invoked to assist her in the writing process by interacting with her body. This introduces the notion of the body as yet another text.

As St. John proclaims in the Gospel, "in the beginning was the Word[...] and the Word was God[...] and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us[...] full of grace and truth". In *Αλμα*, the notion of body as text is constantly suggested through numerous metaphors, referring to Oar herself, as well as to other characters: Lefki (η παρθένα), was like an "άγραφο φύλλο λευκή"(32). Keraso wrote texts similar to her body "μικρά και στρογγυλά γράμματα, όμοια με το σώμα της που ήταν κι αυτό μικροκαμωμένο και σύμμετρο"(35); when Ismini (όνομα που σε κάνει να πονάς), and Oar meet in a hotel, their love-making consists of writing on each other's bodies: "της έγραψα στον ώμο ήλιο και φεγγάρι, σύμβολα του ραντεβού μας. Αυτή με τα θωπευτικά χεράκια της μου έβαψε το πρόσωπό μου άσπρο σαν χαρτί και με έντονο μαύρο το μέρος γύρω από το στόμα διεκδικώντας το απόλυτα για το στυλό της"(54); Angheliki (που αισθάνεσαι την παρουσία της αλλά δεν τη βλέπεις, σαν άγγελος) was "αμίλητη και ατελής σα συλλαβή"(102); Lykiskos saw Oar's body as a crossword puzzle and on it "έχυνε την πένα του[...]απόλυτα μνημένος

στη γλώσσα του έρωτα, *καθέτως*: αγάπη, πόθος, ίμερος, φωτιά[...] και *οριζοντίως*: ειδύλλιο, καημός, παραφορά, μεράκι, φλερτ, οάρισμα"(103); Azaria (η τυχοδιώκτισσα) after numerous adventures finally "διακορεύτηκε από εφήμερους *πιράνχας αναγνώστες*"(127); Dalia allowed Oar "να αυτοσχεδιάζω με το σώμα της και σε λευκή σελίδα να τη γράψω"(158); Eleni (γέννημα της σελήνης) who had a body in constant fluctuation, found that it spread itself like a long word "ανοιεισδυβιαληρηγγυτεμνωδιασικαταλυνοκομμεσπαραχωρισδιαπερνώντας" (176).

Moreover, as suggested in Oar's prayers, money, 'the spirit that the prophets spoke through', is the power that makes all things go round in literature as well as in matters of love, as Ioanna, "a true literary writer", wrote in the poem *Το χρήμα*:

Το χρήμα είναι το πιο όμορφο
που έχουν οι μικροαστοί
έργο τέχνης
[...] (107)

Not surprisingly, therefore, when Neofytos refused to let Oar see the poem he has just written, she offered to buy it, the price being the same as if he sold his body for a night.

The blank writing paper is associated with the patriarchal notion of feminine virginal passivity, as something that incites desire and has to be conquered, something that is waiting to be filled and fulfilled, like the female body in love making. Neofytos thus wrote his poem "αυθόρμητα από τον πόθο του καινούργιου χαρτιού"

and he made it into a wish for femininity. In an ironic inversion of the woman being the other half of man, he now wishes to become the half of the skin, the fear, the desire of women.(61)

Continuing with the metaphorical prostitution of texts as bodies, the stationer's shop that sells blank writing paper, the χαρτοπωλείο, is "φαντασμαγορικό σαν ένα πολυτελές πορνείο"(60), proudly displaying its long-standing tradition in the trade in its logo "Οίκος ιδρυθείς το 18...". There, one can find as many varieties of paper in size, colour and quality, bound in pads or single sheets, as there are girls in a brothel; and many different writing instruments, "μολύβια, στυλοί, μαρκαδόροι" which despite their diversity, not unlike the customers of a brothel, all retain the phallic symbolism of being "όλοι αιχμηροί μα και προσωρινοί χάρη στις μεσίτρες γομολάστιχες". These customers, "αυτοί που γράφουν αιώνια και αιώνια χωρίς να φέρνουν καρπό, γραφιάδες, λογιστές, αντιγραφείς και γραμματείς δε ζουν χωρίς να επισκέπτονται τουλάχιστο δυό φορές την εβδομάδα αυτά τα χαρτοπωλεία", whose smell is so strong "που οι χαρτοπώλες φέρονται σαν μεθυσμένοι, κι από την καθημερινή τους συναναστροφή με τα χαρτιά έχουν αποκτήσει κάποιες από τις ιδιότητές τους, κυρίως μια θηλυπρεπή νωχελικότητα ανεπίτρεπτη σε εμπόρους". Neofytos calls Oar a "μεσίτρα γομολάστιχα" and a "χαρτοπώλισσα αγοριών και κοριτσιών"(60), because of her control over the young people she associates with, and her power to indulge them in constantly new adventures not unlike some ancient writers, who, she recalls, "από πόθο και έλλειψη χαρτιού έγραφαν κι έσβηναν και πάλι έγραφαν κι έσβηναν ωσότου το χαρτί ξεψιλιστεί τελείως και σκιστεί"(60).

The prostitutional element in both the erotic and the religious is carried forth as the word play of the House of God, as opposed to a house of ill-repute, and points to the notion of a "kept" (σπιτωμένη) woman, a mistress living in a house provided and paid for by the rich lover who has total control and exclusive right of entry both into her and into the fiction about her. The erotic and the religious blend further in the story of Foivos (νέος φωτεινός σαν θεός). Just as God did for Adam, Chrysohoos built for his lover Foivos such an exquisite house that "καθένας που το έβλεπε ήθελε να το ονομάσει"(62). Foivos lived with his sister Pamfili (κορίτσι που προσφέρει τη φιλία του σε όλους), who, as Oar says, wanted not only to become a prostitute, but to know all the men in the world. At thirty, when she had already met every man on earth and her wish had been fulfilled, she had to settle down and choose a place of rest. She chose a gold-framed religious icon as her house and there she lived ever after as a "Παν-φίλη / Παναγία Κλαίουσα":

κάθε μέρα την επισκέπτονται πολλοί και την ασπάζονται και σε κάθε φιλή αφήνει ένα δάκρυνάζι να κυλήσει ευχαρίστησης και ηδονής. Για κάθε φιλή παίρνει ασημένιο νόμισμα, λουλούδια, κεντήματα, κοσμήματα και ότι άλλο μπορείτε να σκεφτείτε γιατί και η εκκλησία που τη φιλοξενεί είναι πολυτελής και ο άνθρωπος που την προστατεύει και τη διαφημίζει είναι ισχυρός και ξέρει τη δουλειά του, ενώ πριν τελείως μόνη φρόντιζε να βρίσκει τους πελάτες (64).

The church, as the place to celebrate God on Sundays, is paraphrased by the transformation of a town to a "Τόπος εορτών". In this town of celebrations, where all the people openly play

linguistic games of endless signification, Oar choses to tell the story of her adventures with Christoforos (άνθρωπος δίχως σπίτι σαν το Χριστό της Σελινίτσας). The story is of Oar's persecution by the fascists in the small town of Selinitza during the civil war; she tells of how she managed to escape them, helped by Christoforos who, in revenge for their killing a dog, a friend of his, staged a "μεγαλόπρεπη κηδεία του σκύλου κι εγώ ηθοποιώντας την απαρηγόρητη χήρα του ζώου με τρόπους κωμωδίας και υπερβολής, μπροστά στα μάτια τους διέσχισα όλο το μήκος του χωριού"(66). Then she travelled from town to town in the Peloponnese, under the code-name Penelope, knitting during the day and undoing the work during the night. In those grim times, even the names had become ugly, which is why Oar says "σε πείσμα παίρναμε ονόματα πανέμορφα, συμβολικά, με κάποιο νόημα κρυφό και κάπως διασκεδάζαμε ονοματοθετώντας"(66). Through these coded names, whose "νόημα μας διάλεξε για πάντα", their lives became constantly mobile. They became "πλανόβιοι"(69), hoping that none would be forgotten. As this is a story of the past, its codes are subject to change. The old codes of these words and their old signification can be found "στον χάρτινο νεκρότοπο" of the 'paradise of names'(68), where the past lies in peace. Change has taken over, transforming and creating new codes, but only temporarily, as the adventures of the name for the town of Selinitza shows "το χωριό λέγεται τώρα Άγιος Νικόλαος και υπάρχει στην Πελοπόννησο. Αλλά και το όνομα 'Πελοπόννησος' είναι άγνωστο για πολλούς ανθρώπους της γης"(69).

The endless possibility for signification of words in their associations with other words, in other contexts written by

other writers and read by other readers, is a pervasive current throughout *Αλμα*. It undermines oppositional distinctions between old and new, good and bad texts through the ironic use of canonical intertextual references. This is done in pursuit of an always different way of telling tales, and through the association of the status of educational institutions and teachers with the deeply erotic elements of textuality.

This profoundly subversive position is exemplified by the story of Kalliope (που έχει ωραία φωνή και ωραία όψη) a teacher and, by definition, holder of the powerful position of transmitting the splendour of canonical knowledge. It is she who in the mornings "έκανε στριπ-τηζ γνώσεων στη σκηνή της σχολικής έδρας" whereas at night "στριπ-τηζ του σώματός της στη σκηνή των night clubs", observing to the letter Aristotle's definition of the highest of literary forms while imitating what is described in the novel as the highest of the sexual acts: "για να μας διασκεδάσει εκπλήρωσε με αίσθημα και με ρυθμό την ηδονή στο μέσο κύκλου θεατών. Μιμήθηκε μια πράξη, σπουδαία και τελεία σε μέγεθος και χρόνο, με λόγο ηδυσμένο χωρίς εκάστου των ειδών εν τοις μορφοίς, κινουμένη και δρώντας διαρκώς, με έκσταση και ρίγος περαίνοντας την κάθαρση αυτών των παθημάτων"(101).

In a similar instance, a schoolgirl, Lambrini (η λαμπρή), showed off her knowledge by enumerating the various kinds of love-making as well as various literary terms. Later in Oar's house the two women played another word game during which, as Oar describes, "με σύνθεση και συνουσία και συναισθησία λεκτική και σωματική[...] συμπληρωνόταν στίχος προσωδιακός και ασκηθήκαμε στην

ηδονολογία ζευγαρώνοντας τον λόγο και την τέχνη[...] ως εξής: η αρμονία των λόγων του μπάρ και αυτών του σχολείου· ομοφυλοφιλία - συναίρεση/σαπφισμός - συνίζηση [...] νεκροφιλία - ιστορία / δαιμονολατρία - ποίηση [...] οφθαλμοπορνεία - ανάγνωση [...] πορνεία - σεναριογραφία (125).

Since the past exists only in its textual remains, its truths and treasures sought after by the "νοσταλγούς κειμενολάτρες"(62) or the "αποφασισμένους βιβλιοδύτες"(70) can only be found in the word cemeteries of libraries - "στον χάρτινο νεκρότοπο όπου ειρηνικά αναπαύεται"(68). Even Neofytos' adoration of the past for the past's sake is eroticized when he and Oar, as if in a sexual act, dive into the library of a literary school which "έμοιαζε με καράβι ναυαγισμένο, ακίνητο για πάντα, που στην κοιλιά του κοιμούνται μυστηριώδη πράγματα, ανεξερεύνητα, ίσως σκουριασμένα, ίσως μαγικοί θησαυροί"(70) to find the magic treasures of ancient texts. Magnetized by their illusory display of stable grand values, Neofytos gives himself up totally to these texts "με την ψευδαίσθηση του γλάρου που περνά για στερεή ακτή την προεξοχή βυθισμένου καραβιού, αγκάλιασε ο Νεόφυτος το φάντασμα του ποιητή κι αθόρυβα, ειρηνικά του έδωσε ένα φιλή ενωτικό κι οριστικό". Oar on the other hand, knowing that no meaning can be fixed, follows the female students in their ongoing flexible wandering through texts, urging them to teach her their way of approaching texts, their own language codes. From then on, Oar continues going on her "inferential walks" and writing her life story, whereas Neofytos continues on his pedantically philological quest "εξαφανιζόταν στην ασκητική μελέτη κι έκδοση αρχαίων κειμένων" until he is able to reach "το τέλος κάποιας έκδοσης παλιού κειμένου, ή κάποιου

σχολιασμού, ή μια ανακάλυψη, όταν λ.χ. ταύτισε ένα ποίημα του 2. αιώνα που παραδόθηκε ανώνυμο, ή κάποια διόρθωση παλιάς έκδοσης που μπορεί να τον είχε αποσχολήσει όχι σε ένα αλλά σε περισσότερα διαστήματα ασκητείας"(75).

Αλμα, the story of the life of an ancient Greek word, can thus be seen as the textual result of an attempt to approach the 'great' texts of the past in a fresh way, making them share the same intertextual space with the 'lesser' contemporary cinematic or advertising linguistic contexts, so as to produce a text which subverts the evaluative distinctions between old and new language, or high and low kinds of literature. In that sense, Neofytos' adoration of the past and his quest for the absolute and perfect literary text is further undermined by Oar's suggestions concerning his wish to write the quintessential romantic novel.

According to his plans, the story will begin when the two protagonists fall in love and will end when their love dies; it will be written in such a way that "το μυθιστόρημα θα ήταν μοναδικό και θα καταργούσε ό,τι ποτέ είχε γραφτεί γι' αυτό το θέμα. Οι δυο τους θα ήταν οι τελευταίοι που αγαπήθηκαν πραγματικά και οι πρώτοι που κατέγραψαν αριστουργηματικά τα αισθήματά τους"(78). Oar argues that there are no objective or absolute values, but only subjective and biased opinions. Therefore, the plans for Neofytos' eternal masterpiece are impossible because there is no such thing as perfect lovers or a perfect love story, since every couple see its own affair as unique. Instead she suggests that he writes a short, user-friendly narrative, whose main aim will be to devote

most of its space to active reader participation. In that text, the only pages that will be featured in every issue are the first one, the table of contents that promise interesting and wonderful things, and the last one, the weekly horoscope. The rest of the pages will be devoted to issues presented in such a way that their outcome will always depend on and be specific to the couple that reads them; a text therefore that will appear as a "μυθιστόρημα - περιοδικό[...] όπου σημασία θα είχε η τέχνη του λόγου, η ποικιλία των θεμάτων και σκοπός θα ήταν η ευχαρίστηση, που θα μπορούσε να το ξεφυλλίσει[...] όπως ένα περιοδικό"(78).

Neofytos of course laughs at these suggestions and believes that his new love affair with Evgena (κορίτσι από καλή οικογένεια), will assist his creativity. However, as the celebration of Evgena's entry into the world of love implies, her reputation is of a coarse and common character, a character very different from the ideal that Neofytos expects of someone with that name. The songs of the celebration, full of sexual innuendo, are sung by a foreigner named Julio (an allusion to Julio Iglesias), and the three faces of the spirit that stands by Evgena allude to three sex symbols -ωραία Ελένη, μαντάμ Οτερό (this can be seen as a variation of the name of Madame Hortense in Kazantzakis' *Zorbas*) and Brigitte Bardot.

Both Neofytos and Evgena have a "πόθο για το άπειρο" as she wants to master all the languages of the world "και να μιλάει συνέχεια έτσι που το στόμα της να πλημμυρίσει από λέξεις και να πιγεί από ακατάσχετη λεξιρροία" and he wants, through her, to write

millions of poems and die at the moment when "αυτά συγχρόνως θα εισβάλλουν και θα κυριεύσουν τη μνήμη του" in a personal instant past of his own creation. Their desires are not satisfied, since although she acquires a new name of supreme value, Evrikleia (η φημισμένη), she can only retain it in social gatherings and not in the seclusion necessary for the kind of writing Neofytos has in mind. Eventually, Evrikleia's insolence is punished at the end of the celebrations when she dies having been given the disgraceful name Νιδαρ. That name refers to the sound made by cats, which in turn points at symbols of female sexuality as expressed in phrases like "sex kitten", which bring one back to the faces of the three sex goddesses present at the beginning of the celebrations in honour of Evgena. Through her last name, she will remain for ever unattainable for Neofytos and he finds that the only way he can refer to her in his autobiography is "με ύφος εραστή απαρηγόρητου για το χαμό της πλέον ποθητής"(84).

In contrast to Neofytos' despair at not being able to possess her, Oar marvelled at that woman's refusal to commit herself. As the most famous woman, Evrikleia had the attention of everyone, constantly playing games and asking for rare things as presents, stalling the decision to choose any one of her admirers, living her life according to her name. Oar saw Evγένη/Ευρύκλεια/Νιδαρ's ability to avoid submission to any single relationship as cause for celebration, because, although for Neofytos it means an end to inspiration, for Oar it signals the beginning of endless signification. As she puts it, "αν για κάποιο σουρεαλιστή το πιο μικρό βιβλίο είναι η συρραφή γραμματοσήμων από

ερωτικές επιστολές, για μένα το πλέον πολυσέλιδο βιβλίο θα έδινε η καταγραφή των επιθυμιών που θα εξέφραζε σε μιά στιγμή μια καλλονή πολυτελής και δωροτρόφος"(83).

It should be made clear that it was because of her names that Ευγένια/Ευρύκλεια/Νιάρα was able to become unattainable. Names in *Αλμα* are presented as having a magic power over lives, and name calling, or name acquiring, can have grave consequences in power struggles. One of the strongest examples of the power of names comes in the story of Ioustini who was a name thief, a kleptomaniac "που κλέβει ένα όνομα για γούστο, το κρατά για λίγο κι ύστερα το αφήνει"(84). She preferred stealing the names of dead people or literary characters and in fact her present name came from Durrell's heroine in the *Alexandria Quartet*. Through that name she was able to lure the unattainable Evrikleia "προς τη φανταστική ζωή ενός από τα ζευγάρια του Κουαρτέτου" in the manner of Durrell's text: "όσο το μαγεμένο κορίτσι άλλαζε ρούχα για το ταξίδι, η Αιγύπτια σα ζεστή θαλασσινή αύρα της ψιθύριζε στο αυτί για το φωτεινό αυλάκι που αφήνει πίσω το καράβι στη νυχτερινή πορεία του προς Αλεξάνδρεια"(84).

On the other hand, one can attack or demean someone one does not like by calling them hard names, or names that sound bad, or even names that have unpleasant meanings. Oar found out, to her horror, that when Neofytos started calling her 'his doll' "έπεδίωκε με τη μαγική επίκληση να με μικρύνει όσο και μια κούκλα όμοια ακριβώς με μένα[...] σε σμίκρυνση, κανονικό παιχνίδι, άθλημα παιδιών. Και

φανταζόμουν το όνομα που θα μου έδινε· Μίλι. Μπροστά σε τέτοιο άθλιο μέλλον πάγωσα"(86).

However Neofytos, who could not look to the future because "ήταν στ' αλήθεια μία Παναγία των αναμνήσεων"(90), soon left Oar to find his friend Ambrosios -a notorious fetishist- and together they strove to find elements of the past to explore and return to constantly. Typically unable to deal with women whose future was elusive, the two friends concentrated on the clothes of a rich woman who had recently died, spending hours "στο μέσο των ενδυμάτων, αγγίζοντας και μυρίζοντας, χαιδεύοντας και νοσταλγώντας, σιωπώντας κι εκστασιαζόμενοι, περιδιαβάζοντας και νεκρόφιλοι, αναγινώσκοντας και ψηλαφώντας κι ερμηνεύοντας ψηφία και ίχνη της κειμένης"(88).

ACT III: The Era of Lykiskos

The era of Neofytos establishes the power that the function of proper names has in the narrative. At the same time Neofytos' adoration of the past and the primacy of its texts, which is subverted through Oar's undermining of the distinction between high and popular kinds of literature, paves the way for Oar's next lover who adored comics and popular romances. Lykiskos (που το αίμα του είναι από μπύρα), was the son of Maria (η πραγματική γυναίκα) who believed that her future lay within the family circle, although she lived an independent life writing women's literature, being a "πραγματική συγγραφέας πλαστών ιστοριών"(91).

In contrast to Neofytos' love for ancient texts, Lykiskos has a passion for comics and especially boys' adventure comics: "χιλιοδιαβασμένα αντρικά περιοδικά"(92). His idol is Marlon Brando fighting the forces of evil and deception in order to create a clean, honourable, and brave society.

He likes to visit bars, clubs and brothels that celebrate events like the fiftieth anniversary of the invention of nylon stockings. There, his life is marked by the 'temporary' kind of words, "αυτών που πλάστηκαν αυθόρμητα από τα ερωτόθυμα ζευγάρια, που έζησαν για λίγο σε γλυκομιλήματα"(128); he hails the language of the notorious woman Azaria as an "historic language" because she captures him by promising to provide access to the traces of history on her body and her bedsheets. Claiming that, although he had studied philology, he soon realised that "δεν ήμουν γεννημένος για να περάσω τη ζωή μου ανάμεσα σε παπύρους και παλιά χειρόγραφα"(126) he goes on to invent and tell shocking stories similar to those found in cheap pornographic magazines, or stories in which he appears as the brave protagonist of adventures in exotic places "σαν ήρωας μεταφράσεων λαϊκού περιοδικού"(110).

In that sense, Lykiskos' narratives are similar to the ones that Oar herself admired. These narratives point, in a twofold way, towards the word "φυλλάδα" in the subtitle of *Αλμα*. On the one hand, he alludes to them to explain his adoration for "τα διηγήματα των λαϊκών φυλλάδων"(117); on the other hand, the heroines of the fictional creations he whispers to Oar in bars,

amongst the heavily made-up women with the exposed flesh that seemed to him "καρικατούρες κόμικς"(111), come close to the suggestions Oar had made to Lykiskos about writing a popular novel/magazine, whose ephemerality in inducing pleasure would resemble the sexual act in prostitution, both literally and metaphorically:

Τα τραπεζάκια πού ήταν σκορπισμένα εδώ κι εκεί, πάνω στο πολύχρωμο πλακόστρωτο του μπάρ, φιλοξενούσαν πλαδαρές γυναίκες ακαθόριστης ηλικίας και εθνικότητας. Γυναίκες που είχαν μαζευτεί από όλα τα σημεία της υδρογείου και συνδέονταν μεταξύ τους με ένα μυστηριώδες παρελθόν κι ένα άγνωστο μέλλον. Γύρω σε κάθε μια από αυτές συνωστίζονταν πέντε έξι άνδρες. Όμως ο περίφημος έλληνας κυνηγός Λυκίσκος, που ποιος ξέρει πώς είχε ξεπέσει σε αυτό το μπάρ, κι έκρυβε πολλά μυστικά και μιά βαριά αγάπη, λιγομίλητος και σκυθρωπός, δεν καταδέχτηκε να ρίξει ούτε μιά ματιά πάνω σε τούτα τα ξεγραμμένα πλάσματα, μ' όλο που τα βλέμματα της Δώρας τον κατάτρωναν από την αρχή που μπήκε στο μαγαζί. Σε δύο πράγματα είχε στραμμένη την προσοχή του αυτός σε ένα σκάκι μινιατούρα, δίπλα στο ποτήρι του αναπτυγμένο και σε περιοδικό με κόμικς που σαν πόρνη πλάγιαζε στα γόνατά του, περιμένοντας παθητικά τον αναγνώστη της. Ο καπνός και η τροπική ζέστα έκαναν την ατμόσφαιρα ανυπόφορη(117).

The simile of the text as a prostitute passively waiting for her reader has a double bearing for the narrative in *Αλμα*. Firstly, it sustains the main metaphor of the endless possibilities of prostitution of words in texts, to the multiple desires of the readers, and secondly, it brings into focus the way images of women are created and presented by the narratives of popular culture, be they films, objects, advertisements, trash novels,

weekly fashion and beauty magazines or pornographic publications.

Lists of names of drive-in cinemas and magazines that all make a sexual promise "με τη δική τους πονηρή προκλητική ορολογία - Εμμανουέλα, Αφροδίτη, Virgo, Παριζιάνα[...] Φαντάζιο, Ντόμινο, Φίλησέ με, το Σωφεράκι, Τράστ, Καζανόβας, Διάβασέ με"(118) are used by the narrative in *Αλμα* to subvert that promise by exposing them for what they are, merely words. Thus, just as the boy Timos (ο τιμονιέρης), roamed the streets writing down the names of the makes of cars "γιατί όταν μεγαλώσω, μπορούν να ξεχαστούν όλα αυτά τα ονόματα...καί δεν θα προλάβω να τα οδηγήσω με τη γλώσσα μου"(118), Oar enters the narrative of the American light romance series 'Harlequin' in her dreams, and interacts with it for her own pleasure, despite being constituted by the narrative connotations as a character like a puppet on a string: "ήμουν η ξανθιά κοπέλλα του Αρλεκιν και αυτοαγαπήθηκα"(118).

ACT IV: The Era of Dalia

The assimilation of the text to a prostitute that comes out of Lykiskos' scripts sustains the idea that men are by definition the creators of civilization and culture, whereas women can only follow the stereotypes that man-made culture defines for them, since they can never fully overcome their uncontrollable nature; and this idea is subverted through Oar's relationship with the last of her lovers, Dalia (σα λουλούδι ιδιότροπο). She was a gypsy, and due to her humble background, her behaviour was independent and anarchic. Their relationship called "η μαθητεία της Ντάλιας"

consisted of Oar's teaching her to tame her nature so as to be allowed entry into the dominant man-made culture: "της έμαθα πως πρέπει να έχει τυπικό χαρακτήρα συμπεριφοράς κι εμφάνισης αν θέλει να πετύχει κάτι στη ζωή της. Εάν σνομπάρει την κοινωνία και αρνείται τους τρόπους της, αυτή θα την αποβάλλει[...] να ξεχάσει κάποιες κακές συνήθειες[...] να είναι προσεκτική[...] να είναι τρυφερή και όχι άγρια σαν κατσίκι[...] να ταξιδέψει σε όλον τον κόσμο, στην αρχή βέβαια ακολουθώντας αξιόλογους άνδρες"(140-1).

In order to achieve successful socialization, Oar invited Ariston (ο άριστος άνδρας) to Dalia's birthday celebration. She considered him to be the most important man in the world, because he was a master of the cultural art of *savoir vivre*. In fact it was he who had taught Oar "τον έρωτα της τέχνης[...] πως ό,τι κάνω πρέπει να το κάνω με λεπτότητα και τέχνη από το πλύσιμο των πιάτων μέχρι μια σύνθετη επιστημονική εργασία", whereas her mother had only given her lessons in natural behaviour "τον έρωτα της ανδρικής και γυναικείας φύσης"(141). As they exchange stories from the past, it emerges from the stories of Ariston, which recount anthropological expeditions to unknown tribes, that because he was male he immediately felt part of their diverse cultural practices as "τα πάντα σ' αυτούς μου φαίνονταν συγγενή και αρμοστά στη φύση μου"(142). Dalia, on the other hand, had to rise up to a higher cultural level than that delineated by her origins. Oar considers this task to be a difficult one, because the girl's development, "όχι καθαρός καρπός δικής μου εκπαίδευσης", had already been tainted (by exposure to the romantic stories of popular magazines, films, advertising and television). Ironically, she

teaches her to become consistent with that very man-made image of women presented by the popular narrative media, seeking immortality and fame by becoming "αθάνατη εικόνα εξωφύλλων, μόδας, σινεμά και διαφημίσεων"(143), and thus describing the only way that women can exist in culture.

Oar makes her up, dresses her elaborately, tells her how to pose, and lights the surroundings in expert ways so as to photograph her as if in movie scenes or in a variety of stereotypical roles for women, such as the mistress of a French king, the Venus de Milo, a femme fatale, the innocent little girl that sells matches, Cinderella, Marilyn Monroe, Lulu, Alice and so on, thus creating and saving up for her "ένα καλό παρελθόν, άξιο να το θυμάται"(145) in the future.

Throughout these happenings Oar feels a kind of threat looming over them -"όλα είναι μπλόφα, μα δεν ξέρω τι και εναντίον τίνος"(146) but goes on just the same because she is part of it and spends her days "στην παρατήρηση του λουτρού, του μακιγιάζ, της ενδυμασίας, της ανάγνωσης, του καθρέφτη, του παιχνιδιού της Ντάλιας"(152). Acknowledging the artificiality of those activities, in these six stages, through Oar's descriptions, one can observe at close range the fiction-making process, as Oar prepares Dalia to enter the world of words.

The bathroom becomes "ναός της τέλειας καθαροσύνης" where the "πάναγνη λευκή μπανιέρα"(153) evokes the picture of woman in an aromatic bubble bath as a ritual of "αγιοποίησης[...] σα μωρό που βγαίνει από την κολυμβήθρα"(154), preparing the purified subject for

the arms of the lover or the writer: "η Λολίτα στην αγκαλιά της μπανιέρας-Ναμπόκοφ, η Αλίκη στου Λιούις Κάρολ, η Κλωντίν στις Κολέτ, η Ντάλια στη δική μου"(153).

At the make-up stage, as Oar teaches the girl to create illusions that make her nose thinner, her cheeks healthy-looking, her gaze deeper. Dalia revolts and secretly sends a letter to a woman's magazine signing it "Λιχμάλωτη Ζαζί" and asking advice for an alternative making-up practice, scorning Oar's methods and materials and changing their proper names out of spite: "έλεγε την πούδρα σκόνη ερήμου, το κραγιόν μάγο ταχυδακτυλουργό, το μολύβι πειναλέο ζωγράφο, το βερνίκι νυχιών καλόγρια με κόκκινο αίμα"(156). Oar however, ignores her protests and wishing "τίποτε άλλο παρά να την αφανίσω μια για πάντα και να την πλάσω από την αρχή σαν θεός μακιγιέρ", transforms her through different colours from a mysterious princess of the East, to a fragile romantic aristocrat of the nineteenth century, then to a vamp and so on. She thinks that through the exotic names of the make-up material she would feel "σα σταρ στους δρόμους του Los Angeles καθώς διαφημίζει η Revlon. Και θα ομοιάζει στον Μάικλ Τζάκσον, στη Μαντόνα και στον Πρινς που ενσαρκώνουν την ιδέα της επιτυχίας και του σεξ"(156).

The making up of Dalia by Oar becomes an analogue of the making up of characters in film or fictional narratives by a writer. Thus Dalia as part of Oar's narration takes on the role of a fictional creation under the control of Oar who wishes to create further narrative promises through the repeated naming process: "ως συγγραφέας να την ονομάσω Ντάλια για να φέρω ευωδία σ'

όσους ακούν αυτό το όνομα. Και να γνωρίσω όνομα και σώμα στον κόσμο ως δική μου τέχνη. Γιατί το κορίτσι θα ήταν σα στόμα λουλούδι[...] που θα πρόσφερε ευχάριστα τα ονόματα[...] για χάρη ευτυχών ονοματοθετών"(156).

The dressing stage takes place in Dalia's bedroom, where she spends hours making sketches of boys' figures "φτιαγμένα βιαστικά και άτεχνα κι αναρτημένα το καθένα όπου έτυχε, ντυμένα ή γυμνά, πρόσωπα ή ολόσωμα, ανφάς, προφίλ, δίχως φύλο ή με φύλο σα μύτη Πινόκιου", wandering "αν τα αγόρια μακιγιάρονται επίσης, τι φοράνε ως εσώρουχα", writing letters or poems, recording her voice on tapes addressed to boys, and adoring "την κούκλα Τζων Τζων σα μαγικό υποκατάστατο"(157). Although the spying Oar turns these conspiratorial activities into a fetish, she is threatened by them, especially by "το βάψιμο του σώματός της με φιγούρες ανδρικές που ονομάζει «ένσαρκες εικόνες»"(158), for that kind of dressing up threatens her control over the girl.

Trying to undermine Dalia's obsession with masculine symbols, Oar resorts to clothes. She tries dressing the girl with the costume worn on the first night by a famous actress, or the outfit worn in a photographic session by a famous model, or even clothes worn by a whore while making love with a novelist, but to no avail. Dalia throws these clothes away, asking instead for the clothes of famous male writers "του Tolstoi, του Ελύτη και του Μπόρχες, ποιητών που δεν τους έχει δει μα που συνουσιάζεται μαζί τους,[...] μ' έναν τρόπο που αγαπά ξεχωριστά: λεξιλειχία"(158). Oar's last resort is playing games with her so that, if Dalia loses, she allows Oar "να αυτοσχεδιάσω με το σώμα της και σα λευκή σελίδα να τη

γράφω, σβήνοντας και εφευρίσκοντας, ευσύνοπτο μα τέλειο καλλολογικό διήγημα. Ντύνοντας λοιπόν τη νικημένη μου κουκλίτσα, ξεκινώ από την αρχή και επινοώ"(158). Thus, dressing up Dalia, in words or in clothes that connote specific roles, provides for the endless imagistic possibilities that Oar strives for.

To that effect, she narrates the story of a girl who, preparing for a date with her lover, spent several days in her room preferring the variety of trying on different combinations of dresses and accessories in front of the mirror, instead of the singularity of actually going on a date: "οι άπειρες διαφορετικές εμφανίσεις δίνουν την εντύπωση πως έγινε το ραντεβού, καθώς άπειρες φορές είχε φανταστεί τις αντιδράσεις του αγαπημένου προσώπου απέναντι σε κάθε νέα της μορφή"(134). The importance of controlling the dressing up of the object of one's desire is strongly stressed by Oar who reminds the reader that as the fairytales show, "ένα ζευγάρι γόβες μεταμόρφωσε τη Σταχτοπούτα σε κυρία, ένα κολιέ από μαργαριτάρια τη χηναρού σε βασιλοπούλα"(158), and Dalia could easily be transformed into a girl-wife by a man's cheap coat, as indeed happened later.

During the reading stage, Dalia either tore up and threw away any piece of paper on which Oar had written the names of other people, because she wanted to be the only name in the house and in Oar's memory, or she locked herself in her room, putting together what she considered to be the basic erotic words of a dictionary. She tried in this way to compose a long autobiographical poem that would reveal her captivity to the

world and save her from the grasp of the evil stepmother. The main activity of the reading stage was playing word games, however, and using them to divine the future. In this game, Dalia interprets figures of speech: "εν διὰ δυοῖν" signifies a future pleasure coming from the two activities of reading and dreaming; "μέρος ἀντί του όλου" signifies that she will meet her lover; "Ἐκθλιψη" means that Oar will disappear like the last letter of a word in front of the first vowel of the next lover. In addition, she constructs the way her surname will be formulated in the future, as an acrostich of the names of all the men she will sleep with in one single day:

α ρμάνδος
ν ἶκος
τ ἀκτης
ι ωάννης
φ ρανσουά
ε υθύμιος
ρ ομπέρτος
ν τίνος
τ ζαίημς
υ περίωνας
τ ένεσσυ
ο κτάβιος
υ άκινθος
ρ ολάνδος
κ ώστας
ε υάγγελος(162)

Oar tries to alleviate the girl's insistent dependency on men by subtly exposing what her future will be like, if she continues defining herself this way. Dalia's fate is therefore delineated through a variation of the riddle presented by the poem "Ten little niggers":

Ήτανε έξι μικρές πόρνες κι έμειναν πέντε.
Πέντε μικρές πόρνες πουλιούνταν στην αγορά.
η μιά έγινε κόκκινο μήλο κι έμειναν τέσσερεις.
Τέσσερεις μικρές πόρνες πουλιούνταν στο μπαρ.
η μιά έγινε δυνατό ούισκυ κι έμειναν τρείς.
Τρεις μικρές πόρνες πουλιούνταν στο παζάρι.
η μιά έγινε μπλου τζην κι έμειναν δυό.
Δυό μικρές πόρνες πουλιούνταν στο χρηματιστήριο.
η μιά έγινε χάρτινο νόμισμα κι έμεινε μιά.
Μιά μικρή πόρνη πουλιούνταν στην εκκλησία.
αυτή έγινε νοικοκυρά και δεν έμεινε καμιά(163).

Dalia remains uninterested in Oar's oracle, and even though the old woman offers herself as the good fairy of complex texts "τρεις φορές να με καλέσει καίγοντας μια τρίχα των μαλλιών μου κάθε φορά που διαβάζει κείμενο δυσνόητο και θα της έρθω ερμηνευτής", Dalia goes on drawing their faces as two large zeros side by side, adding the eyes and the mouths with smaller zeros. As Oar observes, Dalia's method is always the same: "ξεκινάει από το μηδέν και το στολίζει ύστερα με ό,τι συμπλήρωμα χρειάζεται για να της βγει το πράγμα που έχει στο νου της...ακόμα και στη λέξη ιστορία, η ανίδεη, ξεκινάει από το κεντρικό μηδέν κι ύστερα γράφει τα αριστερά και τα δεξιά. Έτσι η Ντάλια που κάνει αυτά τα παιχνίδια κι εγώ μαζί της που την κοιτώ, βρισκόμαστε στο κέντρο της λέξης ιστορία"(164)¹⁷.

¹⁷In fact, the letter Ο of the word ιστορία is presented in the text with three smaller circles inside it (called "Zeros" by Oar), drawn by hand in the position of eyes and mouth so that it can be seen as a childish drawing of a face. The text uses non-alphabetic visual material in many instances, as a mechanism of maintaining the reader's attention focused on intertextual or visual allusions which are an integral part of the kind of linguistic games played in the narrative. For an example

Because Oar is mirrored in Dalia's games of signification, she feels that she has become dependent on her, as well as being unable to control that dependency. The mirror and Dalia are an inseparable couple. She looks in her mirror and the message that her image sends back is so self-sufficient that Oar feels unable to interfere. As she goes through an encyclopedia she becomes another entry in it, while Oar can only voyeuristically observe the state of the girl, "ακίνητο σα λέξη στη γραμματική". Dalia commands the mirror and through it her own image and thus, as much as Oar wishes "να την απαλλάξω από την κοινότητα του λήμματος και να την μεταμορφώσω σε πολύτιμη κυρία, ντύνοντάς την με μεταξωτό κομπιναιζόν, τελειωμένη σε δαντέλα φτιαγμένη όλη με το χέρι, λεπτής και σπάνιας εργασίας", she refuses,, "κι εχθρική μου στέλνει μέσα στον καθρέφτη φοβερή εικόνα τη θέλησή της σα χταπόδι να πνίγει το διεσταλμένο κεφάλι του πόθου μου"(165). As Dalia refuses to become the object of Oar's fiction, Oar is unable to continue with her writing and at this stage asks someone younger, Niovi, to observe and describe objectively what really happened between them in order to detect the reasons behind the girl's resistance. Niovi, who calls Oar "η αντί", briefly narrates how Dalia was looking through the pictures of old romantic stories, making sarcastic comments about the magazines that belonged to Oar, while the old woman, urged on by a desire to touch and enjoy

see the woman's face made up of words which is discussed in section 4. 6 of this chapter.

bodies and texts, made a move towards the girl who violently repelled her. In the end, Niovi admits that she cannot tell what really happened, but can only provide a fiction about it: "αυτό είναι ό,τι έχω να πω, και μάλλον το έκανα από ευγένεια γιατί αν και συγγραφέας κατόρθωσα να απαλλαγώ από το άγχος της γραφής"(166). However, it is Oar who is tortured by the anxiety of writing because of Dalia, and thus she intervenes to provide her own version of the event in question. She writes it in parentheses, as a "κείμενο βρυκόλακας" of the continuation of her interrupted narration, to show once more that any attempt to separate Dalia and her mirror is futile because the mirror will always show what Dalia commands.

In the game stage, Dalia has escaped the status of all other Lolitas who in the image of Nabokov's *Lolita* exist passively "μ' αυτοκίνητο περιφερόμεν[ες] στις ανώνυμες πόλεις έχοντας παρέα μεσήλικα προστάτη, [...] που μπροστά στην τηλεόραση σταθμών ξενοδοχείων ροκανίζ[ουν] τσιπς"(167). She is Oar's variation on the 'Lolita theme' and as such, she has become an active creator of stories. She plays story games all day in which she does the naming and the planning, her protagonists being famous singers and movie stars like Nastassia Kinski, Madonna or Richard Gere. Oar marvels at her achievement in having created a creative voice in itself and, although giving up the narrative voice has hurt her, she wants to continue listening endlessly to Dalia's "*langue fatale*"(172).

At this point in the narrative, Oar has become disgustingly old and Dalia has left her, abandoning the role of being Eve in Oar's garden, to become Yiovi (το θηλυκό του Ιωβ), prophetically anticipating, with this name-change, the hardships that she will endure in following a man named Vassilis. The account of her life with that man is narrated by Dalia herself, when she meets Oar two years after their separation, and it is largely reminiscent of the meeting of Humbert and Lolita under similar circumstances in Nabokov's novel. In her years with Vassilis, Dalia learnt for the first time to do all the household chores and for that she came to call herself Noikoula (η μικρή νοικοκυρά). The reason for the dramatic change (which Oar had predicted through her variation on the theme of 'Ten Little Niggers') that has transformed the girl from a lady of leisure into a boring housewife, as Dalia ironically says, constructing another story game, was Vassilis, who "τελικά ήταν η καλή μου μοίρα που είχαν ξεχάσει να καλέσουν στα βαφτίσια μου, έτσι κι αυτή με καταράστηκε να γίνω τεμπέλα ωσότου ένας νέος να με αγαπήσει και να με μεταμορφώσει σε σύγχρονη δραστήρια γυναίκα"(175).

Finally, at this memorable Saturday meeting of revelations, the two women acted out all their habitual activities from the past, talking about it, rewriting it, then erasing it, and playing word games. In fact they gave that indifferent day two new names "Χούμπερτ" and "η κυρία με το σκυλάκι", so it can be both masculine and feminine simultaneously. As a final gesture, and before the women parted for ever, they decided to play the game

ALMA, which proved that their names loved each other, but since everything between them was permanently over, Dalia was quick to point out that the game's prophecies were useless because, as she had discovered to her horror, "άλλο η ζωή και άλλο το παιχνίδι"(175).

ACT V: The Era of Hecate

The narration of Dalia's era is an analogue for Oar's attempts to disrupt the man-made "feminine" fate and reinscribe it in a different way through newly constructed linguistic games. Oar, however, throughout her narrative life, has been part of the word and body games which she used to inscribe and by which she was inscribed in stories whose decoding is constantly shifting. Striving even in her old age for new associations in new stories "για να μη μένει τίποτα κενό στο πυκνογραμμένο σώμα μου"(182), and so that her name which "έχει πεθάνει πριν δυο χιλιάδες χρόνια περίπου", she will continue existing through the deferral of closure offered by the teachings of a school she dreams about. This school, based on Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* would provide the "γεύσεις οι πιο ηδονικές του κόσμου"(179), but the pleasure would come not so much from talking and learning about them as from being part of the process of creating and interacting with them. At this stage, Oar's narrative shifts to the present tense to account for her last days. She admits that "εξαιτίας της μοναξιάς μιλάω για τον εαυτό μου, πράγμα που δεν το έκανα ποτέ στη ζωή μου"(185) going through the fetishes left over from long-lost relationships of the past, as in this undesirable state of being

"υπάρχει μόνο το παρελθόν"(176). The last text she writes is a letter to a schoolgirl offering herself, her wisdom and all her possessions, in return for one of her notebooks, or just "μια λεξούλα σου χωρίς σπουδαίο νόημα, μια ανέμελη λεξούλα σου" which would be enough for Oar to create and be part of a future text: "εγώ θα έχτιζα λαβυρίνθους ερωτικών σημασιών στο αργόσχολο μυαλό μου"(190).

Since Oar, in her old age, has lost her ability to directly go after other words, she gives the letter to her caretaker Hecate to deliver. However, since Hecate strives to make Oar "τέλεια, χωρίς δηλ. επικοινωνία με τον κόσμο, κλειστή σα θεό"(180), that is, as isolated and as permanently defined as an entry in a dictionary of the ancient Greek language, and since Oar has refused her any kind of voice in her narrative she can never be sure, unlike the reader, that the letter reached its destination.

Very soon, external time, that is, the future, freezes for Oar and she has no option other than inviting Hecate to play word games with her. In the midst of the games however, the local policeman appears and demands that Oar follow him into an imprisonment as final as death. Oar panics at first, and in the ironic intertextual manner prevalent throughout *Αλμα*, desperately seeks to escape like Papadiamandis' heroine: "η πρώτη μου κίνηση ήταν να αναστηκωθώ λιγάκι για να τρέξω έξω από την πόλη, στα βουνά των μαγικών βοτάνων και να πεθάνω σαν τη Φόνισσα, πηδώντας από χαράδρα σε χαράδρα, όχι για τον φόνο μα για την αγάπη κοριτσιών". However, realizing that she is not a character from an

ethographic narrative, but from a rather noble ancient Greek text, she changes her mind, saying that "ως ήρεμη αστή τού ζήτησα μια ώρα χρόνο να τελειώσω το παιχνίδι μας, ενώ αυτός βημάτιζε στο πεζοδρόμιο αδημονώντας"(194).

The last game that Oar plays is yet another word game, but a suicidal one this time. She prepares her suicide through the game of "αλφαβητική κρεμάλα" on which she first tried out the names of various writers "Ναμπόκωφ, Σουίφτ, Γκόμπροβιτς, Λυτερσεν, Τένεσσυ Ουίλλιαμς, Μρόζεκ, Μπορόβσκι, Σαντ, Ρεμπώ, Ζεράρ ντε Βιλλιέ"; then, as the last name, she tried her own, made of letters of names of yet more writers, "που περιλαμβάνει το Ο του ΡΟΕ, το Α του ΜΑΝ και το Ρ του Ρένου"(194). At that final stage, the name of Oar, that is her body, is completed in the word game, completing her life as well: "Μολις γέμισε το όνομά μου ΟΑΡ συμπληρώθηκε και η ζωή μου(194).

As the woman and the word Oar die, and as "το σώμα της γυναίκας κείται επιτέλους στο χαρτί"(195), someone else, or rather some other linguistic space called "η συγγραφέας", takes over the narrative process, filling the gap in the shift of narration as the economy of the text requires: "Μετά που πέθανε η Οαρ, αναγκάζεται η συγγραφέας να πάρει το λόγο για να επιπλώσει το κενό"(194). Through the obligatory intervention of another fictional device, namely "the writer", the last female companion of the narrator is forcibly introduced, because Oar, in the narration of her own life up to this point, had always insisted on keeping "τον λόγο μακριά απ' αυτήν"(192) and thus the narrative continues: "Έτσι αυτό το σιχαμένο πλάσμα με τη ρέουσα σάρκα έμεινε η μόνη κληρονόμος της Οαρ,

που θα τη θυμάται και θα τη θυμίζει στο μέλλον, και η μόνη κυρία του επιλόγου. Το όνομά της που δεν ήθελε καθόλου να προφέρει η Οαρ, είναι Λος Αντζελες. Η Λος Αντζελες αφηγείται και τώρα και για πολύ μετά το 2000"(195). The shift in narrative direction is accomplished by the appearance of this new character, or rather this new linguistic space, which had earlier been presented as Hekate (η τρίμορφη) and had been refused a speaking role by Oar in her narration. She is now given speech by the "writer" because she has a body that is still 'fluid' in contrast to Oar's own, which has become fixed in the suicidal word game. She, therefore, takes over the whole fiction, testifying that although Oar's life is over and "λέξεις όπως Οαρ=έρωτας· η γυναίκα πάνω στον έρωτα, θα αναπαύονται εν ειρήνη μέσα στα μεγάλα λεξικά της αρχαιοελληνικής γλώσσας"(195), narratives about them can continue being written.

The final narrator is named Los Angeles, which rather prophetically means 'η γυναίκα του μέλλοντος' and expresses the wish for publication of her writings in the last chapter of the book, which is titled "Letter to the publisher". From then on, the narrative angle of the text becomes even more confused since the letter to the publisher is introduced as "το γραπτό μιας δωδεκάχρονης"(198), a twelve-year-old prostitute named Filitsa (που δίνει και παίρνει φιλιά), who, after giving an hour of love-making to an unknown person, is named by him "Ερώτιον": "Κι ύστερα κάποιος με κόιταξε και μου έδωσε τον σωστό τίτλο. Κι εγώ του χάρισα

μιας ώρας έρωτα για δώρο. Αυτός με είχε ονομάσει «Ερώτιον»”(198)¹⁸. However, Oar also used to be called “Ερώτιον” when she was young, as the same character testifies: “σαν η τελευταία ερωμένη που της ήμουν, κληρονομώ μερικά προσωπικά πράγματα της Οαρ, το ψαλιδάκι, στολίδια του πανηγυριού, προσκλήσεις για θέατρο και κινηματογράφο, πολλές φωτογραφίες της σε πορνοπεριοδικά, τότε που ήταν νέα, και κάποιες συνεντεύξεις της. Όλες πάνω κάτω λεγαν τα εξής: *Όνομα: Ερώτιον[...]*”(195). So the writer of the penultimate chapter not only shares the same name with Oar, a name that signifies a prostitute who lived with male philosophers, but does so in a way that reaffirms the narrative's connection between writing and prostitution. This character, therefore, cannot wait to become just like Oar: “ανυπομονώ να γεράσω για να ανακαλύπτω συνεχώς νόστιμα κορίτσια σαν και μένα. Και για να αποκτήσω διπλό όνομα Οαρ-Γραμματή (που αγαπάει τα γράμματα, η συγγραφέας)”(198). She therefore proceeds to sign the letter to the editor as “η συγγραφέας και χρονοβάτισσα Φιλίτσα”, quite sure that her text will be published.

In the postscript to the letter, ‘the mistress of the epilogue’ gives directions for the rather ambitious future of her text, which she calls “λογογράφος”¹⁹:

¹⁸In the *Μεγάλη Ελληνική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* the entry for Ερώτιον reads as follows: Εταίρα ζώσα μετά της Μαρμαρίου, Ηδείας και Νικιδίου παρά τοις φιλοσόφοις Μητροδώρῳ και Επικούρῳ.

¹⁹“λογογράφος” means ‘ο γράφων πεζόν λόγον, πεζογράφος, ο γράφων, συντάσσων λόγους επι χρήμασι’ and ‘λογογράφημα’ means ‘λογοτέχνημα’.

εαν ποτε γινόταν κινηματογράφος αυτός ο λογογράφος, με δράση που θα πρόσθετε ο σκηνοθέτης και εικόνες στη θέση των λέξεων, θα ήθελα οι ρόλοι των ανδρών να παίζονται από σένα, θεέ εκδότη, ο ρόλος της Οαρ, από σένα, πρώην παραδείσια πόρνη και ύστερα πανάθλια οικόσιτη Λόλα, τα πρόσωπα των νέων αγοριών από τον μελλαχρινό φίλο μου Χασάν, τα πρόσωπα των κοριτσιών από εσάς πανέμορφές μου Ρέα και Ιλεάνα πού σας βλέπω κιόλας σαν υγρό δώρο για μένα την γριά δράκαινα. Το πολυτονικό σύστημα γραφής θ' αντιστοιχούσε σε ασπρόμαυρη εικόνα. Εγώ η συγγραφέας θα είχα τον ρόλο της Λος Αντζελες.(199)

The allusions to prostitution are constant in this concluding passage, first through the adjective "χρονοβάτισσα"²⁰ as well as through the name of the narrator/prostitute "Ερώτιον", which points to the subtitle of the novel, "της εξαισίας πόρνης φυλλάδα". In addition, the narrator refers to herself as "εμένα τη γριά δράκαινα". This brings to mind the name 'Δρακούλα' assigned to young girls who had not yet entered culture and had not yet been socialized. Dragon women, therefore, become the images of women remaining outside the social order permanently. The connotations of that name can become clearer if one refers to an earlier narrative point which described "νυχτοκόπες γυναίκες από τα γύρω καμπαρέ και τις ταβέρνες...νυχτοβάτισσες...συγγενείς των μαγισσών απ' τον Μεσαίωνα...και το έντονο βάψιμο στο πρόσωπο θύμιζε βάκχες που μόλις

²⁰ In the narrative, all the words that are combinations of the prefix χρονο- always connote prostitution, since, particularly in that line of work, time means money; see 'χρονοκόπος, χρονομοιχός, χρονοδύτης, χρονοστάσια, χρονοφιλία' and so on. (110).

έρχονται από οργιαστική γιορτή. Για το φόβο που προκαλούσαν αυτές οι περιθωριακές, ονομαζόνταν δράκαινες"(111).

Since women outside the social order, women who write, are related to prostitutes, by implication the whole of the writing process becomes an analogue for prostitution. Furthermore, as "λογογράφημα" implies a fee will be paid for a text, in that sense, the word "εκδότης" is implicated in a monetary exchange in return for publication, referring back to the verb "εκδίδομαι" which means 'to prostitute oneself for money'. Therefore, as *Αλμα* makes clear, women that stand for the linguistic spaces of proper names become a metaphor for the way words are prostituted by writers, publishers and readers in the life of fictions: "Οι συγγραφείς έχουν ωραίες γυναίκες αλλά τις εκπορνεύουν δίχως ντροπή, στους αναγνώστες. Μερικοί απ' αυτούς δίνουν πολλά χρήματα για να τις αποκτήσουν"(97).

The personification of words in this text, or rather the impersonation of characters by the words in this text, gives them flesh and blood in a way that shocks the reader in view of the scandalous sexual content of the narrative. However, the metafictional propensity of the narrative constantly manifests itself, reminding one that words can only be metaphorical and that final meaning is forever unattainable: reading, which necessarily involves going through words, is not a simple matter because every word is presented in the narrative as a prostitute, who can be used by all but whom nobody can claim as their own.

4. 6. The Feminine Body/Text and Man-Made Language

The androcentric naming games that have defined woman in terms of man, rest upon the assumption that words, the building blocks of language, are static forms assigned to objects providing them with a meaning that is real and reflects the reality of the world. Following that assertion, woman, as the other of man, does not have a language of her own to speak through, but can only use the man-made one that expresses the man-made reality that has defined her in terms of the metaphor mentioned above.²¹

In a double bind, and since on the one hand, writing in relation to the blank paper's feminine status can only be a masculine activity, while on the other hand, the stereotypical image of woman is the one exposed by the comment of Errikos (νέος ρομαντικός) who said that "οι γυναίκες είναι σκιές ή περιγράμματα που μόνο αν γεμίσεις με το σώμα σου τις αγαπάς"(73), and since

²¹Dale Spender(1980) has made an extensive study of the subtle ways in which man-made linguistic codes assert the masculine as the norm, thereby structuring the continued subordination of women. She argues that by exposing the falseness of existing male meanings, it is possible for women to create their own codes in order to achieve self-determination. However, although her definition of language as man-made is relevant to this analysis, the use of that language in terms of the feminine position delineated by the narrative of the novel *Άλμα* is closer to Irigaray's arguments(1985) for using language parodically in order to work out gender-conscious texts.

"Τυναίκα είναι αυτό που φοβάται διπλά, όπως θα έλεγε ένας μανιώδης των ορισμών"(154), the fate of a woman, whose compulsion to write is an imperative for survival, is doubly fearful.

The story of Bibi (κορίτσι άναρθρο), testifies to this, for she died abused by masculine language because,

από κάποια έλλειψη δεν απέκτησε ποτέ λόγο γυναικείο[...] οι άντρες που πήγαιναν μαζί της την προτιμούσαν από τις άλλες φίλες της που τη ζήλευαν γιατί είχε τους περρισσότερους εραστές. Κάποια φορά γνώρισε έναν πραγματικόν άντρα που τον αγάπησε τόσο ώστε τον ένιωθε σαν μελανιά πάνω στο κορμί της. Όσο τον αγαπούσε το κορμί της γέμιζε με μελανιές όπως έχουν οι γέροι παντού κι έτσι πέθανε. Οι μελανιές αυτές ήταν τα νεκρά λόγια, σα νεκρά κύτταρα εκδηλωμένα στο σώμα. Πεθαμένη δεν μπορούσε να μιλήσει[...]εάν μπορούσε να μιλήσει ίσως δεν πέθαινε αμέσως[...]γιατί τα λόγια θα έπεφταν από πάνω της σαν άχρηστα κύτταρα, σαν πουκάμισο φιδιού (73).

In addition, the narrative offers the story of Maria (η πραγματική γυναίκα) who wrote women's literature to suggest that such a commitment can be torturous, and to expose the man-made naming process. In fact, Maria returns to the narrative as a man, having taken on a new name diametrically opposite to the one she used to have, Androula (η ανδροπρεπής), and tells Oar of her adventures in name-changing: "Προσπάθησα πολύ. Τότε με είχε κουράσει αφάνταστα η έντονη ομορφιά και θηλυκότητά μου. Με έπιασε μανία αυτοκαταστροφής. Ήθελα να αφανίσω ό,τι είχα και δεν είχα, τη θηλυκή μου φύση και το όνομα"(109). First she tried to commit suicide and acquired the name Thanoula (που επιθυμεί τον θάνατο); then she travelled and became Xení (αυτή που αισθάνεται ξένη προς τη ζωή).

However, "Οι άντρες ωστόσο με κυνηγούσαν πάντα γιατί παρόλες τις ταλαιπωρίες, διατηρούσα ακόμα κάποια γλυκύτητα" and thus she started avoiding all men and was consequently named by them Alexia (που μάχεται τους άντρες). She cut her hair, wore trousers and became Agore, Agoritsa (το αγοροκόριτσο). Engaging successfully in fist-fights and other power contests with men, she was then named Alkimi (που μπορεί να υπερασπιστεί τον εαυτό της). Soon, though, she stopped fighting men, "δεν τους πολεμούσα πια αλλά ούτε τους έβλεπα με πόθο" and thus she was named Menandra (που μπορεί να βλέπει τους άντρες δίχως πόθο). Later she became Androniki (που έχει νικήσει τον πόθο των αντρών), and having become a quasi-man herself, she lived among bachelors under the name Arsenia (η γυναίκα που έγινε άντρας). As she had managed to change her gender completely, she even found a girl to live with, and referred to herself using the grammatical masculine gender "Είχα γίνει ένας σωστός άντρας, τίμιος, αξιοπρεπής και οξύθυμος". All was well until in a bar, a woman taxi driver told everyone that Arsenia was really a woman. It was only after she beat up the loud woman in the most masculine way "της έκανα τα μούτρα της σαν κρέας" that she finally was given the honourable name that she had dreamed of: Androula (η ανδροπρεπής). However, having satisfied her initial desire to stop being a woman, Maria told Oar that "αυτό το πλέον αντρικό των ονομάτων με γέμισε με τέτοια δύναμη και αρρενωπότητα που με αηδιάζει. Αρχισα πάλι να τριγυρνάω εδώ κι εκεί σα μεθυσμένη", imploring the old woman to rid her of it: "Σε παρακαλώ απάλλαξέ με από το όνομά μου".(109)

Having been unable to shed her feminine gender in all her name changes, Maria rejects her adopted masculine image and longs to escape all classifications through a new, indifferent name, like Mora or Vava, that will signify imminent death. Oar, who cannot offer her a name with no future, names her Virna Lisi, as a compromise. Through her new name, Maria/Virna Lisi will still be a woman yet immortal, famous yet immune to torture, like all images of stars and cover-girls which appear in the narratives of photographs, advertisements and films, forever in their prime, as parts of a man-made fiction about feminine images that is offered "προς πώληση σε άγνωστους και ανώνυμους χαρτολάτρες και βάσκανους πόρνους των ματιών"(116). In that sense, Oar's renaming of Maria in this way, reaffirms the impossibility of escaping already existing language codes, while at the same time it exposes the falseness of those codes by attributing their function to the only character that has been described in the narrative as a "πραγματική συγγραφέας". In so doing, the narrative designates the function of the 'real' writer as one who can only produce "πλαστ[ές] ιστορί[ες]"(91).

Oar's offer to the 'real woman', who devoted her life to writing 'women's fiction' comes not so much from the wisdom of her advanced age, as from her position as a woman with no name but with an eternal function. Oar is the epitome of woman as the metaphor of man because her name, meaning wife, signifies only in marriage to the male. However, in the self-referential context of *Αλμα*, the life story of the word Oar is not only narrated by

herself, but it is also written in relation to, through and by the narrations of the numerous characters she associates with. The signification of her function as the wife of man is subverted, since in the narrative of *Αλμα*, she takes on a linguistic multiplicity through various name-changes and relationships with both male and female partners/words in the manner described by her feminine discourse, her 'οαρισμός'.

Although Oar dies at the end because she is unable to fulfil the demands of the man-made signifier assigned to her, the text about her life goes on through the intervention of another female writer. It is in this context that this character can go on existing in interdependence with other words, in a way totally different from the loneliness assigned to her as a dead word in a dictionary. Her life story is her love affairs, therefore Oar's message lies in the way she conducted them as non-possessive, free-flowing and provisional. Attention is brought to fictional textuality, not as a means to determine and fix meaning, but as a necessary condition for the process of creating and being created through liaising with others.

Oar knows that her text, the text of the woman's eternal position and function as wife, can only exist in the margins of the existing culture as is most of the literature written by women, and she comments about that fact quite clearly. Her fiction is, she says, necessarily "μοιρασμένη στα λευκά των περιοδικών, με γράμματα να ακροβατούν στα χείλη των σελίδων"(32) or even "γραμμένη σε άλλες επιφάνειες λευκές που έτυχε για λίγο να βρεθώ

μπροστά τους, στον τοίχο όπου ακουμπάει το κεφάλι του κρεβατιού, στο περιθώριο βιβλίων, σε μια γωνία της παλάμης ή στο γόνατο επάνω, στο σώμα μιας κούκλας όπου είχα γράψει ολόκληρο ημερολόγιο"(51).

In *Αλμα*, therefore, Oar becomes a textual function. As such, she does not claim to have overcome the man-made language limitations in her fiction writing, but she surely claims to have used them in her own way in her attempt to inscribe the feminine body in a different kind of discourse. With the knowledge that women can only be defined "με κριτήρια αντρικά"(148), she used every kind of available narrative material to select and recreate characters in the collage of her biography. Of course, in this process she assumed the role and the name of "Σουλτάνα", alias 'η γυναίκα που κυβερνά' (121), since, as if in a quest to create the definitive image of the feminine, she cut photographs of women from magazines, named them, and provided suitable biographies for them, thereby seemingly imprisoning them in her "λεξικό βίων"(121). As shown through her erotic associations, however, her love affairs were never final, as her text will not be fixed either. For, despite preparing her lovers (like Dalia) -bathing them, making them up, dressing them, reading them, mirroring herself in them, playing with them and thus putting them into her fiction- she always let them go, fully aware of the infinite possibilities of always forming new relationships, creating and becoming part of other stories, other contexts, other names and other meanings. In fact she allows her story to become part of the narration of Hecate, and by giving a voice to her worst enemy she relinquishes all claims to her own

narrative voice as the only one appropriate to deliver her life story 'truthfully'.

Finally, having established the *différance* of her kind of discourse, in the manner of the woman who "ονόμαζε τα πάντα άντρες, πρόσωπα και αντικείμενα και τον εαυτό της Διαφορά"(68), she can be sure that although the word Oar is dead, the method of writing the wife's story will be carried on by Los Angeles, the future woman who will reinscribe the feminine with the existing words, although through a different process, until its hidden image magically appears in the manner of the picture of "Αβη" which, although made of "λέξεις-πηλό"(135), that is man-made words, emerged as the most beautiful woman in the world, with all the multiplicity and creative plurality that the letters of the alphabet offer:

υπεροχη αφροδιτη ωραια πανέμορφη θαυμασια εκθαμβωτικη εξαισια υπεροχηθαυμα θεια θελκτικη αιθερια εκπαγλη εκθαμβ νοστιμαστερι συλφισ αφροδιτη χαρμα ανθος ωραια υπεροχη εκθαμβωτικη εξαισια θεα				
θεια ονειρο ονειρο αστερι συλφισ τελεια οραμα	καλλονη θεια τη θεια	θ α υ μ α σ τη θεια	καλλονη θεια τη θεια	θεια ονειρο ονειρο αστερι συλφισ τελεια οραμα
δοξααφεγγαρι θειαααθεια ανθοςδοξα θεααααανθος	πανεμορφη πεντάμορφη			φεγγαριδοξα θειαθεια δοξαανθος ανθοςθεα (135).

The woman "Αβη", however, is the only one that does not have a signified in the 'Index of Names'; in fact she does not need to, because her proper name is finally improperly named: it is made

up of letters of the alphabet randomly put together, in a way that negates the theme of identity and difference put forth by the function of all proper names to represent a unique character. The elusive concept of the proper name "Αβη" becomes an analogue for the subversive women's fictions discussed in this thesis, fictions that do not attempt to define an isolated, reversed version of the paradigm for the universal individual, but to explore a concept of gendered subjectivity that foregrounds the construction of identity in language and in relationship.

CHAPTER 5

ΤΟ ΧΡΩΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΜΕΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ: DEATH BY WRITING

As argued in the previous chapter, *Αλμα* is a fiction about the making of fiction. Its main character, the word Oar, is personified in the narrative to assert her textuality and to present a concept of subjectivity and identity as constructed in language. When, at the end of the narrative, Oar, the character, becomes metafictionally de-personified, resuming its original status as *le mot-récit*, it exposes the characters she associated with in the narrative as verbal constructions, that is words not beings, caught with the reader in the web of language. In that sense, the future signification of the word Oar, which acknowledges the dependent nature of its identity, refutes the existence of an individuality uniquely attributable to a reality or a history independent of language.

By exposing her status as word, the character Oar forges an unbreakable link between subjectivity and textuality and becomes a story-person, joining the ranks of fictional characters of similar status, whom T. Todorov has called *les hommes-récits* (1971:78). The choice of the noun 'homme' in the original French implies the male as a paradigm for the general and universal and serves as yet another clue of the gendered translation of subjectivity into language.

In discussing Todorov's *hommes-récits*, and arguing that these story-persons are one of the oldest *topoi* of death and fiction, Brian Mc Hale gives the example of Scheherazade,

whose existence, inside as well as outside the fictional world, depends upon [her] continuing to tell stories. As long as she produces narrative discourse, Scheherazade lives; at the moment her discourse falters or stops she will die. Here quite graphically, life has been equated with discourse, death with the end of discourse and silence(1987:228).

Since silence signifies non-existence, Mc Hale continues, the disembodied discourses of those misleadingly called 'narrators' or 'speakers', are "painfully self-conscious about their own status as discourse, know that, try as they might, they cannot utter their own annihilation, for as long as they utter *anything* they continue to exist. The only death for them is silence, a blank page"(1987:228).

Silence, the form of death that Oar tried to escape in *Αλμα*, becomes the only means of escape for the character Aris in Neni Efthymiadi's novel *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* (1988)¹. The future of his free self begins as soon as his torments of uncertainty in the past end, and the silence outside the fiction of his selfhood

¹Neni Efthymiadi was born in Athens in 1946. Apart from *Το χρώμα του μέλλοντος* (1988) she has written four other novels: *Εσύ κι εγώ μοιάζουμε λιγάκι* (1973), *Ο κήπος με τ' αγάλματα* (1975), *Η φωτοβολίδα* (1978) and *Αθόρυβες μέρες* (1983). She has also translated extensively from English, French and German. For a close reading of the novel *Αθόρυβες Μέρες* see G. Thalassis 1992: 35-59.

gives, in terms of the title, colour to the future. This chapter will explore the way the novel subverts the traditional notion of the subject as a bounded agent in the world, as the centre of all things and as coinciding neatly with itself. The discussion will also employ psychoanalytic theories of the discursive formation of the subject to argue that subjectivity is explicitly portrayed in this novel as an effect of language. The development of the argument that the subject is *subjected* to language is underlined by the feminist critique of patriarchal definitions of the universal 'humanist' subject.

Death for a story-person may mean living in a specific discourse and dying outside that discourse. In *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* the strategy of the protagonist and narrator, Aris, is to hurry and fill up pages with discourse in order to reach the desired end of his writing. This will coincide with the end of his story and his passing into silence, having achieved death through the death of his discourse.

Writing then becomes a process of annihilation of the subject, and writing about one's life in the past figures both as a repetition of life as well as the sign of death. Aris, narrating his past life, foregrounds his desire for a death into silence, making the unthinkable death available to the imagination in a displaced way. D. R. Hofstadter has argued, however, that apart from such a displacement as the one offered by fiction,

personal non-existence makes no sense at all. All that we know is embedded inside our minds, and for all that to be absent from the universe is not

comprehensible.[...] When you try to imagine your own non-existence, you have to try to jump outside yourself, by mapping yourself onto something else. You fool yourself into believing that you can import an outsider's view of yourself into you[...] though you may imagine that you have jumped out of yourself, you can never actually do so"(1980:698).

Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος is a novel that explores the relationship between subjectivity and textuality. By focusing on the relation of the subject to the text, and by questioning the existence of a fixed knowable personal history, it subverts the notion of the individual subject and the individual text as free, unified, coherent and consistent.

In order to achieve his death by writing, Aris embarks on a journey from Athens to Geneva, during which he begins writing his thoughts about his surroundings and wonders about the rest of his itinerary. The bulk of the text, however, consists of Aris' writing about diverse episodes and people that have played a central role in his past life, registering the stories about them as irregularly as they spring up from memory. Finally, the story concludes when the journey ends in a bar in Geneva. There Aris finishes his "notes" and the narrative necessarily reaches its own conclusion.

Aris' first-person narration can be divided roughly into three temporal levels: 1) the level of the journey, when he narrates events and thoughts concerning both the present time and his past. This in turn can be subdivided into two other levels: 2) the recent past, specifically the period from May (when he

returns from his first trip to Geneva) to September (when he embarks on the second journey to Geneva), which is taken up by the narration of events before and during the excursion to Pavlos' country house; and 3) the narration of events of the distant past, that is the sum of the time prior to that excursion. The narrative is divided into chapters according to the itinerary of the journey, with most chapter headings designating a destination or a temporary stop: on a train to Belgrade, then to Nish, then to Belgrade airport, then to a bar in Geneva. Each chapter starts with a section in the present tense, referring to the actual time of the journey and the writing process, and then continues into a journey into events in the simple past or imperfect tense.

Aris' narrative, irrespective of temporal level, has a strong autobiographical flavour which is amplified by the fact that he produces a text about himself while taking a journey alone. The journey, be it motif, theme or literary strategy, has often stood as a metaphorical discourse which enables a critical perspective to be shed on the past, the present and sometimes into an emerging future. No matter how perilous to the self, the journey has provided literary texts with a means of defining the self. It does not simply provide a text with a structuring device on which to arrange the incidents of a plot, but more crucially, it expands the notion of travelling through real or imaginary space and time, whilst marking the development of an individual's consciousness. This can be done either through unfolding the history of a retrieved past backwards, or through unfolding forward the process of coming to know who and how one is. *To*

Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος, governed by Aris' autobiographical desire to synthesize a self from fragmented memories of past experiences, gradually takes on the attributes of a confession which, as Francis Hart writes, is "personal history that seeks to communicate or express the essential nature, the truth, of the self"(1970:491) from the standpoint of the writing present.

The notion of the 'colour of the future' enters the narrative in terms of the contradiction between the open and unknown possibilities that characterize Aris' journey into an emerging future, and the completion of a "notes" that is strictly delineated by revisiting the past. As his subjectivity is part of a past reality, the future of that subjectivity depends upon managing to understand what has already happened. Since Aris' discourse produces a fragmented recollection of past experience, however, his subjectivity is as incoherent and confused as his memory. The only consolation and recourse that the narrative offers is that of death, which escapes classifications of past, present and any knowable future, both in terms of physical presence, which desires the stability of a concrete subject position, and in terms of the text, which strives for fixed and coherent meaning.

In *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, it is only through the represented consciousness of Aris that the represented world is presented to the reader, whether immediately present in the manuscript that he writes while on a long journey, or recollected in the memory-journeys back into his past life, or anticipated in the signification of the title about 'the colour of the future'. There is

no stable point of reference or other world behind Aris' consciousness, but only a flux of discourse in which fragments of different incompatible realities flicker into existence and out of existence again. Thus, death, being outside language (outside Logos), silence, is the boundary to which this text or every text can venture. Annihilation comes when Aris' discourse is silenced, if only to be resurrected every time a reader opens up Neni Efthymiadi's novel.

Aris is at once the narrating self and the narrated self. His subjectivity is dispersed in the roles of narrator and character. He tries to reassemble himself and assert his unitary identity against the disintegrating effect of the text. However, which role is finally responsible for the text remains unclear, since Aris the narrator is a tool for the exploration of the subjectivity of Aris the character. As the search for the authentic self oscillates between the writing self and the written self, it depends on the two positions for its existence. It can fall into the desired death-silence-nonexistence only outside both positions, outside discourse. Aris, as the 'I' of the author/narrator is both the vehicle for autobiographical fact within the projected fictional world and the maker of that world. As the 'I' of the character, he proclaims his having been constructed, his artificiality and dependence on all levels, cancelling the authority of the narrating 'I' into a determined and regulated existence.

6

The autobiographical element in *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* functions as a realistic dimension in juxtaposition to the fictional world, so as to foreground death, the end of both. Aris is not a real 'I', but a paper author in a Barthesian sense, a function in a novel which serves, as Foucault would argue, not to "re-establish the theme of an originating subject, but to grasp the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning, and systems of dependencies[...] it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analysing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse"(1979:158).

In this respect, the first-person narrative of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* can be said to be distinct from other first-person narratives in so far as it is explicitly conscious of modern psychoanalytic theories of subject formation, especially with regard to the Lacanian notion of desire as a product of language and death (the ultimate non-signifier) as the only escape from Logocentrism.² Furthermore, with regard to the fact that the narrative blurs the distinction between the narrated self and the narrating self, Efthymiadi's novel illustrates the subject as constituted by the pre-existing signifying chain (patriarchal culture) while stating the impossibility of "being" in ways other than at the mercy of language; in this sense, *Το Χρώμα του*

²See Footnote 10 in this chapter and Lacan 1977:292-325, Gallop 1982a, and Mitchell 1974.

Μέλλοντος lends itself to feminist critical theory which focuses on the discursive construction of subjectivity as an analogue for the construction of the "feminine". In so far as the engendering of the creative subject discussed in the Introduction is concerned, *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, by acknowledging the autonomous "self" of the writer as a fabrication of the linguistic processes it seeks to escape, is by implication a gender-conscious text which subverts the distinction of writers on the basis of sexual difference; in so doing the text helps to illustrate the general claim of this thesis that male or female "selves", put forward as being unaffected by ideology and culture, are part of the same patriarchal system that defines and constructs them as masculine and feminine ones.

As the writer does not originate his own discourse but mixes already existing discourses, the subject is also an effect and a function of a mixture of already existing discourses; communication between characters in the narrative as well between the reader and the text of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* can be seen to be allegorically focusing on the relationship of the subject to the text.

In the narrative, the exploration of the relation of the subject to the text is dealt with in terms of separation and death, physically or metaphorically. Aris embarks on his last journey, and his text, so as to separate himself from his past. In so doing he returns to his past through the same text. Before separation and death happens, the narrative is already permeated

by the notion of return, which is facilitated on the level of the story by the journey motif.

Starting from the immediate narrative present and going into the deep past, the reader finds Aris returning to Geneva; the idea for this second trip was triggered in Aris' mind when he was returning from his first trip to Geneva and materialised after the return to Pavlos' house for an excursion. All the return journeys are marked by death: the first Geneva trip by the bomb that (possibly) caused the death of many people, the excursion to Pavlos' house by Boris' (possible) death, and the second trip to Geneva, which was financed by an inheritance that came to Aris through Eva's death, is also marked by the lethal attempt against Aris' own past. Since there is no authority in the narrative, outside the first person account of Aris' manuscript, which guarantees the reality of those deaths, they all remain uncertain, almost hypothetical. The contradictions in their circumstances are never resolved. As all deaths discussed in Aris' narrative simply become part of the fiction, the only materially "real" death is the metafictional one of Aris, the narrator cum-notewriter cum-main character, which necessarily comes with the last sentence of the fictional discourse of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*.

The narrative directs the reader's attention away from its metafictional dimension and towards a realistic one, as one strives, along with Aris, to stabilize the polysemous possibilities, and reconstruct the past which is fictionalized in

Aris' narrative account. Because the reader can have access to Aris' past only through his memories of it, memory, the only means to reconstruct the reality of the past, also becomes the narrative power to unscramble the confusions of a past as it was being lived and is still confused whilst being written about or read. Both Aris and the reader, through the totalizing power of writing and reading about what has already happened, try to manage to construct order and meaning through memory. The synthetic activity that defines and gives meaning to the subjectivity of both reader and writer is thereby underlined. Subjectivity and textuality become interconnected, since Aris and the reader have the power to create and control the text's possible meanings of reality and subjectivity. However, whose reality is being represented remains unclear, since the conventional reader's expectations, which are analogous to Aris' own expectations for a final synthesis and an answer to what the colour of the future might be, are constantly and persistently manipulated by the text. }

Aris' text about himself exposes the fictional status of a coherent subject position and a coherent and meaningful text, through the representation of reality as a human construct. In the narrative the definition of the 'I' depends on a text which comprises memories of what the 'eye' sees, and since what the 'eye' has really seen can never be definitely resolved, the reality of both the 'I' and the 'eye' is never concrete or self-sufficient but rather as interdependent and polysemous as any text. }

Aris tries to synthesize his past and inscribe his subjectivity, his 'I', as it was and is constructed by him and by others. He produces a first-person narrative, a narrative taken from the point of view of the look of his 'eye'. Since the point of view has been regarded as the guarantee of subjectivity in a narrative, Aris' narrating 'I', the specific point of view that produces a fiction about the self, in the discourse of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, dissolves the self into fiction and subverts the status of the novel as a motivated and coherent inscription of a stable subjectivity.

Subjectivity is not destroyed, though, in *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*; it is 'situated' in a Derridean sense in the midst of a series of competing discourses and competing versions of reality that continuously forge its identity. The exposition of the discourses that formulated Aris' subjectivity is presented through the narration of past events of Aris' life, delivered from the viewpoint of the particular time at which they happened in the past. As layers of memory unfold, introducing characters into the narrative in a fragmented way, Aris' life and the events of his story will be discussed in this chapter in terms of each character, and in terms of particularly important situations, thus situating Aris' subjectivity and its textuality in the context of reading a synthesis of, as well as a distinction between, the discourses on which it depends for definition.

As discussed above, the communication between characters in the narrative can stand as an analogue for the relationship of

the subject to the text. All the main characters of the narrative appear to be related with or producing some kind of 'artistic discourse' and are, in turn, interrelated in terms of that artistic production, either literally or metaphorically. On a literal level, Christina is a sculptor and Mario is her model; Elsa is an actress; Pavlos writes literature and Boris is his mentor; the journalist writes articles; Philippos is a literary editor; Martin takes photographs. On a metaphorical level, Aris' mother, Eva, has 'created' him and Aris has in a sense 'created' Jill. All communication between creators and creations is described in Aris' account as exclusive and unique to the particular pair involved. The narrative is thus driven by a metaphorical propensity that underlies the notion of 'creation' as a discursive textual analogue in which, and through which, the creator's individual subjectivity is asserted and at the same time subverted.

As the process of the emergence of the individual subjectivity of each character is inscribed in Aris' narrative, it shows itself in the process of always being created in textual form, producing and at the same time being produced, as Aris' narration progresses. Since every chapter begins with Aris' pondering upon the status of his "notes" or the state of his situation at the present time, each short present-tense narration triggers Aris' memory and moves the story to past events which presented contradictions, problems and ambiguities similar to the ones he is experiencing while on this journey. Through this triggering of memory, the discourses of the main people in his

life are presented and register themselves as the force that drives Aris' writing, even at the time of the journey which he undertook in reaction against them. The discourses of the people in his life, as well as the events relating to them or to Aris, are always presented in the first person, always as Aris perceives them, and become speculations on a reality he does not know or control.

The text is based on the unresolved contradictions that make up the past life of Aris, and since his self is also subject to these unresolved contradictions, his narrative fails in its attempt to see beyond what he has already observed. This subjects the reader to the same unresolved contradictions as well. One is unable to fix a closure of meaning either on Aris' subjectivity, or on what really happened to him, or even on what really happens in this novel. Because only the limited 'I' of Aris provides the largely inadequate information through its 'eye', both Aris' text and Aris' subject position are presented in the process of being created as sites of contradictions that are at once inscribed, affirmed and reinforced through the relationship of the one to the other.

Therefore, since the strategy followed in this novel presents Aris as restricted by his own, as well as others' interpretations and inscriptions of his subjectivity, in the same way that the others' discursive and subjective positions are subject to Aris' narrative discourse, the search for unity and reality in the discourse of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* is frustrated

by the general, polysemous interdependence between textuality and subjectivity.

5. 1. The Beginning of a Journey and a Text

Aris' desire to know reality, to answer the question 'What [really] happened?', and consequently to come to know who his real self is, manifests itself as soon as he embarks on a journey while also embarking on writing a text. He puts the past history of his 'I' on paper, as he gazes upon its fragments from the point of view of the 'eye' of his present. He is more or less in control of his actions both on the level of the journey and on the level of the text, whose narrative voice, however ends up repeating the question instead of answering it.

The narrative begins with Aris determined to safeguard the centrality of his 'I' and his 'eye' from external intervention, in the same way as he appears to safeguard his note-taking. He starts jotting down his thoughts on paper long after his journey has started, proclaiming that "στο ταξίδι αυτό τα εξωτερικά ερεθίσματα δεν με αγγίζουν καθόλου. Κάποιος μπαίνει και βγαίνει απ' το βαγόνι...μα εγώ δεν ενδιαφέρομαι παρά για τις λευκές σελίδες μου, που αργά και σταθερά γεμίζουν"(22). This first registered act of his (writing) is presented as a compromise, and as an effect of the inability to resolve the contradictions and the ambiguity between binary oppositions such as literature and life, movement and immobility, certainty and fantasy, to name but a few that will torment both Aris and the narrative until the end of the text.

Aris begins his narration acknowledging the limitations of the writing process by contrasting the static environment of the text to the everchanging character of life. He delivers this rather trite view in the form of a gnomic statement³ that makes up the first paragraph of the narrative: "Κάθε κείμενο πάσχει από μια ακινησία αφύσικη. Η ζωή τρέχει και αυτοσχεδιάζει ευφάνταστη, ενώ το χέρι, αφέλεις, σχηματίζει στο χαρτί λέξεις στατικές με υποχρεωτικά νοήματα, κώδικες συνεννόησης που φιλοδοξούν το ελάχιστο"(7). He calls his decision to write a compromise, because the closed and restricted nature of his "notes" is in direct contrast to his resolution to keep the itinerary and the possibilities of his journey open. His journey will be temporarily made specific only through sudden impulses and urges, and therefore it will remain untainted by the constricting operations of rational thought: "Είχα αφήσει ελεύθερες τις πιθανότητες"(8).

Aris seems to be unable to be unaffected by external stimuli, however, and he presents his decision to write as another excuse for his having grown tired of the train journey, of

³ Gnomic statements that are supposed to offer the distilled and concentrated wisdom of what is traditionally acceptable or true are a favourite narrative technique of Neni Efthymiadi, who uses them to present the various competing or conflicting discursive or subjective positions in her novels. In *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, gnomic statements appear repeatedly to cancel out each other's assertions, since when one position is inscribed through such a statement it is erased by the equally forceful assertion of its opposite.

the constant change of landscape and people, which made him suffocate as his body was constrained by the train-seat. Having concluded that "η συνεχής εναλλαγή εύκολα γίνεται μονότονη"(7), he wonders about the sense of freedom that keeping his journey open offers, and rationally deduces that decision-making and a slight restriction of that freedom is unavoidable: "Σίγουρα είχα αφήσει ελεύθερες τις πιθανότητες, μα η ελευθερία ίσως με κούραζε κάποια στιγμή, θα σήμαινε αδιάκοπες αποφάσεις και κάθε απόφαση είναι περιορισμός, μια άδοξη παραίτηση από το άπειρο της δυνατότητας για τους φραγμούς της πράξης"(9).

Conscious decision-making, however, becomes for Aris an inescapable imperative. As he considers the alternative outcome of his life -if for instance he sticks to following his urges and lets coincidence decide the outcome of his journey and his life- he excuses his decision to make decisions by saying that after all even the decision not to decide is still a decision, and thus "η αυτοεγκατάλειψη είναι η παθητική απόφαση εκείνου που ενεργητικά την αρνείται"(9).

Aris, a master of the operations of logic, buys paper and pen and starts writing his "notes": "Αρχισα πάλι να γράφω, όμως χωρίς τη βεβαιότητα της συνέχειας, γιατί η ακινησία του γραπτού ενοχλεί πάντα, είναι η πτώση στο συγκεκριμένο από το αόριστο, μα και η παραίτηση από την ταχύτητα, αφού ακολουθείς ένα χέρι δύσκαμπτο να χαράζει το άσπρο και περιμένεις εκείνες τις στιγμές όπου τα δάχτυλα θα πονέσουν και τότε σταματάς, για να συνειδητοποιήσεις πως η προσπάθεια είναι κυρίως σωματική και η σκέψη ο ατμός που χάνεται στη σχετικότητα"(9). Although

this compromise is a conscious decision, resulting from rational consideration of the alternatives, it does not provide him with any kind of reassurance or certainty: it is still a drifting between the binary oppositions of action and immobility, specificity and vagueness, life and textuality, body and spirit that produce the uncertainty which these "notes" will strive to stabilize, and from which Aris will try to escape through this journey.

He is fully aware of the conventionality and limited scope of the established codes of communication, the necessary but inadequate meanings of words, and the simplistic structure of the binary oppositions, when he starts writing his "notes". Nevertheless, as no other medium of registering his thoughts is available to him, he embarks on this task, despite his strong doubts about its usefulness, and despite his uncertainty about having made the right decision:

Δεν έχω φτάσει στο σημείο να μετανιώσω, να παραδεχτώ πως το γραπτό ή το ταξίδι μου είναι ένα λάθος, άλλωστε τι είναι λάθος, τι σωστό, απλοϊκά σχήματα που κατευθύνουν σκοπιμότητες. Ωστόσο, δυσπιστώ. Σαν τον δρομέα που πρίν την εκκίνηση γίνεται ξαφνικά σκεπτικιστής κι αναρωτιέται ποιό είναι το όφελος απ τον αγώνα, μα με τον πυροβολισμό μεταμορφώνεται και ρίχνεται ασυγκράτητος σε αμφίβολες νίκες(9).

Having thus established the inescapability of decision-making for the future of his journey, and having accepted the relatively uncertain status of his "notes", which, in the end, he calls "τα χειρόγραφα των αναπόφευκτων αποφάσεων"(222), Aris returns

to the past to tell the story of this uncertainty and his disbelief in his sensory perception. In recounting his being unable to make the appropriate decision or to distinguish between reality and illusion, and in exposing his lack of knowledge of who he really is, Aris' narration shows the way in which both his 'I' and his 'eye' were constructed by the discourses of the main people in his life, people who are also the main characters of this narrative.

The following sections will summarize and analyse Aris' relationship with the following characters: Eva, Christina, Mario, Jill, Pavlos, Boris, Philippos, Martin, and the journalist. In so doing, and while in the previous chapters I provided a sequential reading of the text (discours), in this chapter I will be reconstructing the "histoire" of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*.

5. 2. All About Eva

Aris describes his relation to his mother, Eva, as the most undemanding and free he has ever experienced: "Ήταν, όμως δεν σήμαινε πολλά. Τουλάχιστον τίποτα από όσα επιβάλλει η μυθολογία της λέξης"(40). Despite the biological bond, and despite the connotations of her name, Eva's being his mother never becomes a determining factor in the way they regard each other; Eva remains throughout his life a strange woman who always keeps a distance from him, and whom he meets sporadically.

When Eva becomes pregnant, she bars Aris' father, the "συνένοχος εραστής"(49), from visiting, and disappears on travels

for months, finally coming back to announce that the child, a boy, was born dead.

Aris rather bitterly remarks that "σίγουρα δεν γεννήθηκα νεκρός", and despite the fact that his life starts with a lie about its very existence, he remains with Eva for a few months, until she gives him as a present to her friend Christina, the sculptor.

Because Christina refuses to take any overt payment for his upbringing, Eva takes on the role of the mediator who will make sure that her sculptures are sold, becoming "ο μεσολαβητής, ο εξευγενισμένος μεταπράτης που θα κάνει την τέχνη εμπόρευμα"(49). This allows the arrangement to continue as smoothly as possible. Aris rarely sees Eva until well after adolescence. Then, one day, after not having seen her for three whole years, and weeks after he has moved out of Christina's house and into his own flat, Eva reappears, inviting him to meet her in a bar.

At the bar, Aris, having been reassured that Eva will not start to apologize and to analyse the reasons for her past actions, Aris begins to feel comfortable in her presence and admires her exceptionally rare sense of self-balance and individual brilliance "μια ευφύια ελεύθερη, πρόθυμη να αυτοκαταργηθεί και να ριχτεί σε προσωρινά πάθη"(64). Relieved to realize that the 'bonds' between them will only come from what he calls the temporary effects of chance, "οι αόρατες αιτίες και συγκυρίες που ονομάζονται τύχη"(67), Aris rejoices in the sense of freedom that Eva's attitude offers, a sense that becomes the underlying

element of their relationship, giving it a considerable degree of permanence until Eva's death fifteen years later.

The relationship between Aris and Eva is free flowing, on the literal level as well as on the metaphorical one where Aris, the literal creation of Eva, stands as an analogue of her artistic creation. Constant to their discursive premise, the meetings between the creating subject (the 'unmythological' mother) and the subject being created (the 'unmythological' son), never become antagonistic, but remain conspiratorially interdependent. As their meetings are never controlled, never agreed, and "ποτέ δεν προχωρούσαν σε εκμυστηρεύσεις ή αναλύσεις του « εγώ » "(67), they never enter into the process of defining each other's role, but they rest rather on general and obscure matters. Such a relationship never provokes a rupture, and neither does it achieve a rapprochement. Although their thoughts move safely along similar paths, making them spectators of each other's unspecified logical process, "που ψάχνει κάποιο σχήμα, ή καταργεί τα σχήματα ή αυτοαμφισβητείται"(68), Aris cannot but embrace Eva's logic, especially the way in which she effaces all traditional demands upon their biological relationship as she "απλώς μυθοποιούσε κι απομυθοποιούσε τόσο γρήγορα, έκρινε μέσα από τόσα πρίσματα, ώστε το θέμα έχανε κάθε νόημα κι έμενε η γοητεία μιας διαδικασίας ατίθασης που αρνείται αρχή και τέλος"(68).

It is only logical, therefore, that in the self-effacing and totally uncompromised relationship that Eva and Aris enjoy, they can both be individual subjects, free to pursue their personal

desires. Eva's presence, or absence, never acquires the attributes of a menacing αίσθηση, as in the case of Christina, who even in absence becomes "μιά αίσθηση που τρυπάει τσίχλους και πατώματα και τρέχει σε διαδρόμους"(69).

The absence of interference, even when Eva is present, inscribes her relationship to Aris as a game in which the rules and the roles of the players constantly shift. Her desire never becomes a command for Aris, since even when she gives him a cheque for a significant amount of money she leaves it undated, offering him not so much a specific means through which her desire will become an "επιταγή", but more the means to enter an open-ended scenario, saying "σου χαρίζω ένα παιχνίδι"(70).

Eva's uncommanding desire is subverted in the narrative, which exposes Aris, the analogue of Eva's creation, as being subjected to her wishes. In the same way, her subjectivity is dependent on him in order to assert its peculiar character. Thus, some years later, Aris forcibly enters Eva's mythological games and discovers that he has never been really free of her commanding desires, which have ruled his life in ways he has been unable to detect. He finds himself in the position of having no choice, and conciously accepts the rules of Eva's game, when he discovers that she has left him an inheritance, which he liquidates in order to realize his last desire to take the long journey into the unknown, during which this story is written. The mythology surrounding Eva's character is in fact Aris' own creation, based on the perception he has of the most enviable

way she lived, free and only following her urges, travelling around the world without plans and without having specific reasons behind her decisions. Eva's spiritual legacy to Aris, the love of the spontaneous and the unknown, becomes the discursive position that Aris metaphorically takes up himself, when he embarks on his journey to Geneva, a journey literally financed by Eva's material legacy.

It all starts when, after Eva's death, a lawyer gives Aris a sealed letter and a key. He never opens the envelope despite its obvious temptation, because Eva's death "δεν απέκτησε ποτέ την οριστικότητα που περιμένει κανείς από ένα θάνατο"(39).

The mythology about Eva lives on because of the non-finality of her death, and although the strange and slightly rusty key represents for Aris the inviting possibility of unlocking old and paradoxical mysteries of the unknown, the sealed envelope becomes repellent, because Aris interprets it as containing instructions for the use of the key, thus being "το άντρο του συγκεκριμένου, του ρεαλιστικού, που, προσδιορίζοντας, θα περιόριζε, θα απομυθοποιούσε"(39). The fear of demythologizing is based on the belief that the envelope and the key will lead Aris to a place where reminders of Eva's past are gathered. The decision not to open the envelope is based, therefore, on Aris' firm belief that he has already known the realities of Eva's life in his own past and is not in any need of reminiscing about bygone eras.

Aris' self-assurance is destroyed by the very operations of chance, which he himself has proclaimed as the underlying

element of his relationship to Eva, and has radically changed the way he perceives his own past

On the 28th of May, Aris has just returned from his (first) trip to Geneva feeling "αναστατωμένος, χρειαζόμουν μιά διαφυγή[...]εγώ χρειαζόμουν μόνο να ξεχάσω, να ξεχαστώ"(40). As the same date marks the fourth anniversary of Eva's death, Pavlos pays Aris the customary commemorative visit.⁴

Pavlos accidentally sees the forgotten key and offers to accompany Aris on a visit to the warehouse. In his usual speculative argumentation, Aris is sure that he stands to gain a lot from this venture, since the same occasion, the opening of Eva's legacy, will be a pivot for Pavlos' reminiscences, because he will delve nostalgically into Eva's memorabilia. For Aris, who desperately needs to forget what has happened in Switzerland, it will be the key to forgetting.

At first, Aris thinks that the effect of the visit to Eva's warehouse can only be as temporary as everything else that she ever did or participated in, because of her nomadic lifestyle. However, as soon as that view is formulated, he detects some danger in the effects of temporariness, since "ακριβώς γι' αυτό οι κίνδυνοι διάρκειας ήταν αυξημένοι. Στο προσωρινό ο άνθρωπος δεν αμύνεται, δεν βρίσκει λόγο να το κάνει, το δέχεται ανάλαφρα, μετά ξεχνιέται..."(41). Immediately after, and still appealing to what he has named

⁴ This episode comes a week before Aris talks to Pavlos about his plans to go away again in a few months.

Eva's 'nomadic disposition', Aris changes his interpretation of the effects of Eva's action, and, contradicting his previous assertion, he reassures himself that her nomadic logic is still alive, and cannot produce any permanent results, as the nomad "έχοντας μάθει να προσαρμόζεται σε όποιες συνθήκες συναντήσει, ξεχνά πως θα μπορούσε να επέμβει σε αυτές, να τις διαμορφώσει"(42).

All interpretations aside, it has taken Aris many years, up to the point when he visits the warehouse, to understand that the real reason behind Eva's conduct is a kind of "συμπαθητική διαστροφή, αν, φυσικά, θεωρηθεί διαστροφή η αμφισβήτηση της παραδοσιακής αισθητικής και πρακτικής"(42).

The shocking revelation comes as the key unlocks the door to a huge warehouse, showing Aris that Eva had stored all Christina's sculptures that he had observed being created and leaving the studio.

Having had his belief in the full knowledge of his past annihilated by the dimensions of a reality that he has not even calculated, he becomes scared at his inability to perceive any kind of reality, even the simple fate of the creations which "για χρόνια ζούσα το αργό τους πλησίασμα στην οριστικότητα κάποιας μορφής, για χρόνια τα αποχαιρετούσα ένα - ένα όταν μεταφέρονταν από το εργαστήριο και πάντοτε τα φανταζόμουν σε όλα τα σημεία του ορίζοντα, να επιδεικνύονται μ' έπαρση. Η έπαρση πέθανε λοιπόν στην αποθήκη;"(43).

The fact that Christina's sculptures died as soon as Eva put them in the silence and darkness of the warehouse, instead of

allowing them to be publicly appreciated by potential buyers, becomes significant for Aris' status in the narrative, both on a literal as well as on a metaphorical level. It points towards the dependability of the creator as well as the creation on other people's interaction, not only for the continuation, but also for the definition of their existence. Eva, who 'killed' Christina's creations, had done so because she despised the mythological status of the creation which demands almost sacred protection, and thus establishes unbreakable ties between itself and its creator. It is precisely because of that attitude that Aris has been able to enjoy such a free and unrestrictive relationship with her, since Eva never interfered in his life in her attempt not to bind him to her.

The metaphorical death of the sculptures in the warehouse, where they lay sheltered and hidden from the appreciation of an external gaze, is literally used by Eva as a means to protect Aris' life, her own creation, as he continues his comfortable existence under the gaze of Christina. Thus Eva, by condemning Christina's works of art to death through life imprisonment, manages to shelter her own creation, but also imprisons it/him in her desire-turned command.

Under these narrative circumstances, Aris' status in the narrative becomes equated to that of all created objects, as works of art, be they sculptures or texts. Through the shocking revelation about the real fate of Christina's sculptures, which reveal their inexorable dependency, he implicitly discovers that

the only way to escape a reality which he cannot control, but of which he is necessarily a part, comes through falling silent, from voluntarily committing textual suicide.

Thus, when Aris leaves the warehouse, still shocked, he gradually starts considering the accuracy of Pavlos' definition of Eva's relationship to him as "την αιώνια πρόκληση, το ένστικτο που λοξοδρόμησε, τη φύση που σκότωσε τους ίδιους της τους κανόνες"(43). He thinks that he can use this deviation from the norm, and the material independence that Eva has provided, as a means to realize the idea of a journey he devised on the plane returning from Switzerland that very morning, and this, in turn, will be a means of distancing himself from the unpleasantness of further revelations by throwing the reality of his self into permanent silence, out of the darkness of other people's manipulations.

Aris decides that the inheritance that passed to him in such a conventional way (from mother to son) has only to be used as unconventionally as it was amassed in the first place, so that the final exit can become real. Eva's devastating control of Aris' life triggers off the formulation of his own desire for a permanent exit from other peoples' narratives: "το οριστικό, το μεγάλο ταξίδι μου από καιρό ήταν μια ιδέα αόριστη που αργά, μα σταθερά, έπαιρνε σχήμα[...] η αόριστη ιδέα έγινε επιθυμία. Επιτακτική[...] Δεν απέμενε παρά να πουλήσω αυτά που η Εύα περιφρόνησε και να καταστρώσω ένα σχέδιο οριστικό"(44).

While Aris has settled the arguments concerning the ideological aspect of selling Christina's sculptures, whose

potential Eva had scorned, he nevertheless finds that in the process of selling them he is forced to assume the unpleasant role of the vendor of Christina's sculptures, something that Eva herself had refused to do. Still bound to the left-overs of Eva's legacy, he is once again humiliated by being forced to equate himself openly with art objects as merchandise:

Επρεπε να ταυτίζομαι με το εμπόρευμα, αλλιώς δεν θα έπειθα, και κάθε τόσο να μεταμορφώνομαι σε προκλητικό πομπό που, σιωπηλά μα εύγλωττα, παρακαλεί για δέκτη. Επρεπε να αντέχω δοκιμασίες ταπεινωτικές. Εγώ να επιδεικνύομαι και οι άλλοι να με ελέγχουν, να με περιεργάζονται, να με απορρίπτουν σαν σώμα ξένο, άχρηστο, ή να μου χαρίζουν μιά πικρή ανακούφιση με την αποδοχή τους.(35)

His decision to sell does not appear to guarantee a revival or a continuing existence for the sculptures of Christina. As, at this point, these works of art are assimilated to Aris' metaphorical status in the narrative, their adventures just serve Aris' enforced realization of the limits and helplessness of an object's dependent position, as opposed to the independence of the buyer, which he desperately envies, especially in terms of "τις δυνατότητές του για άρνηση, κατάφαση, επιλογή"(35). Although the position that Aris desires to occupy lies on the periphery of the creating process, it is nonetheless a crucial and integral part of it. By indirectly becoming part of the continuing creative process, the buyer, as the gazing appreciator of objects of art, or as the reader of texts, is the one who verifies their existence and consequently also their creator's existence. Without that

intervention the creative process remains undefined and devoid of any signification.

Although Aris' desire to escape through a long journey will be satisfied, it is clear that it is only made possible by the unexpected intervention of past, elusive forces, especially the intervention of Eva, the person he has considered as the most uninterfering presence in his life. It could also be argued that Eva's desire/command for Aris to become the sole heir to her material legacy is the command/desire of the creator to the creation, to live on in a future that will reassert the individual subjective position from whose point of view that creation was delivered in the first place. Aris' desire to embark on a journey without prearranged plans is a continuation of the way Eva had lived her life, and Aris' desire to escape all ties with the past and its demanding relationships is the continuation of Eva's conviction to defy the monism of ordinary logic, through thinking about the "γοητεία μιας διαδικασίας αντίθας που αρνείται αρχή και τέλος"(68). Thus, Eva's and Aris' undemanding relationship on the level of the story, as well as their metaphorical one on the level of the narrative, as the interaction between the creating subject and the text depends for its continued existence on the commands of the kind of freedom that Eva wanted to achieve. She created Aris to mirror her own subjective position and Aris has to realize his part of that interaction, to uphold and repeat the commands that define his position as much as hers, in order not to endanger the existence of both.

In this second journey to Geneva, which is devoted to total freedom, Aris finds that the past realities which depend on memory to prompt them, bring them out and then put an end to them, put limits to the subjects' freedom to inscribe its subjectivity in writing. They constantly remind Aris that the notion of being able to know the full reality of what has happened is at the very least a self-mocking utopia. Aris therefore, writes on the way from Belgrade to Nish that the journey away from the past and towards the freedom of the self has concrete limitations since it "μετατρέπεται απροσδόκητα σε φυλακή, θυμάσαι τις διηγήσεις για τους σκοπούς και τα τμήματά τους και, ακόμη μιά φορά, συνειδητοποιείς την ουτοπία του σκοπού, αφού η πραγματικότητα διαγράφεται μέσα από την ασφυξία του τμήματος και μόνο"(45). The principle of freedom that Aris has to observe in order to assert his subjectivity by reaffirming the discursive position of Eva, his creator, will be compromised if confined in his "notes" and the textual limits that they impose. The only real way out is through an exit from the text, which will mark the death of the textual existence of the subject position, and entry into silence which will mark the beginning of the only possible free and unending existence.

5. 3. Signs of Christina

When Eva returns from her self-imposed exile, her declaration that the boy was born dead signifies a denial of his status as her son. On the literal, as well as on the metaphorical level in which Aris stands for Eva's creation, Aris is very much

alive. In that respect, Eva's choice to offer him to Christina as a present, as the object of exchange in art creation, cleverly perpetuates his central role, for according to Aris "ήμουν ένα δώρο άτυπο λοιπόν και μάλιστα με παραλήπτη εύστοχα διαλεγμένο. Η Χριστίνα με δέχτηκε με χαρά, με την ίδια χαρά που η Εύα με άφησε"(50). Eva's choice enables her creation to continue to exist outside her own life but very much at the centre of Christina's life, who, as a sculptor, depends upon observing animate objects in order to create her art. Furthermore, Eva's timing is excellent, since at the time the only human body available to Christina's observation was that of her old father who was decaying into death. Because of Eva's offer, Christina would now have the chance to observe the growth that Aris as a child could offer, because "εκεί η φθορά θα της έδινε την αίσθηση της άνθησης και της ανάπτυξης"(50). Aris, as a living being, serves to trigger Christina's inanimate creations and feed her illusions of continuing growth which spring from his status as an observable entity, created by someone else and developing independently without her intervention. In that sense, and if on a metafictional level, Aris stands for the text that Eva had created and then released, Christina stands for the (first) reader of Aris as text, and as such becomes the only facilitator of the continuation of his existence.

For as long as Aris is the observed, he describes his relationship with Christina as full of innocent confrontations that never last long: "όλα γλιστρούσαν σε μια ανώδυνη επιφάνεια"(24), explaining thus the reason why "τα παιδικά μου χρόνια κύλησαν τόσο ανάλαφρα"(24).

Christina's method of sculpting is "ανάλαφρη", despite working with hard materials. Her attitude is also "ανάλαφρη", because, as Aris interprets it, she never focuses on a specific and fixed point for more than is necessary for her to get a fleeting impression of change and growth. Her discourse, (at the beginning) as Aris remembers it, moves along the same painless lines as well:

Μιλούσε καί τα λόγια της δεν ηχούσαν σαν αυστηρά προϊόντα σκέψης, αλλά σαν βιαστική παρόρμηση, προορισμένη να σβύσει μαλακά. Καί, σίγουρα, δεν συνήθιζε να σκέπτεται -οι περισσότεροι άνθρωποι με αισθαντικότητα βλέπουνε μόνο φράγματα στη λογική είχε όμως έντονη παρατηρητικότητα[...]
Ήταν μιά παρατηρητικότητα ακίνδυνη, υπήρχε για να υπάρχει, όχι για να κλειστεί σε συμπεράσματα, γι' αυτό την δεχόμουν ατάραχα, ακόμη κι όταν ο στόχος της ήμουν εγώ(24).

The words concerning Christina that Aris uses, "αθώο, ανώδυνο, ανάλαφρη, χαϊδεύει, όχι αυστηρή, ακίνδυνη, ατάραχα, ανορθόδοξη, νωχέλεια, αθόρυβη", change when the adult Aris becomes the observer rather than the observed, and sees that her painless tactics have changed. The change for both of them comes about when Christina decides to use another animate presence as a model for her sculpting and stops processing her material through her fantasies. As her observational skills focus on a model Aris, has his status undermined by another presence, and observes that her criticisms focus on him. Christina's tactic, in terms of Aris, from "ανώδυνη" becomes "απωθητική", when his perception of the reality of their relationship, and the distinction between who was the observer and who was the observed becomes blurred.

He starts questioning the merits of a life devoted to reproductions since "μια ζωή όπου η ποικιλία εξασφαλίζεται με παραλλαγές της ίδιας ασχολίας δεν είναι ασφυκτική;"(51). Moreover, even though he understands that the relationship of her subject position to her art is an interdependent one, since through the metamorphoses of the sculpting material she is watching and moulding her own development, he questions the possibility for personal growth through a single mode of expression: "είναι όμως εξέλιξη η προσκόλληση σε έναν τρόπο έκφρασης, η αυτοεγκατάλειψη στις τροχιές μιας και μοναδικής γλώσσας;"(52).

Aris' impression that Christina's decision to lead a life devoted to the production of inanimate objects "δεν ήταν κάποια μορφή φανατισμού, αλλά ο άστοχος τρόπος της να υπάρχει"(53), (as strong as his belief in Eva's "ευστοχία" in choosing Christina as his guardian) is fortified by the comments about her work made by the rare visitors to her studio, who use praise to disguise what Aris considers the deficiencies in her work: "γιατί ήταν, φαίνεται, ένα έργο έντονο, αλλά φτωχό, κλεισμένο στις εμμονές που το προκάλεσαν και καταδικασμένο ν' αδιαφορεί για μια σύνθετη αντίληψη του κόσμου"(53).

Christina's obsessive immersion in sculpting, as a futile way to assert herself, makes Aris enjoy his independence, free from demanding influences in the midst of the silence generated by the absence of Christina's attentions. This assertion immediately puts him in the position of someone who, like Eva, has a complex view of the world as opposed to the simplistic mode of existence that Christina presents. Through the role-

reversal that comes about from Aris' own self-proclaimed synthetical and analytical abilities, Christina's subject position becomes dependent on his interpretations: "το πρότυπό της[...] έμενε αστάθμητο, με αποτέλεσμα να εξαρτάται αποκλειστικά από τις ερμηνείες μου. Κι όπως τα μάτια μου άλλαζαν συνεχώς, άλλαζε μαζί τους και η μορφή της Χριστίνας"(53). Under these circumstances, as the subject of the observation/receiver constantly exchanges position with the observing subject/transmitter, their relationship gradually becomes so interdependent that Aris feels that the only way to know who the real Christina is, can come by moving away from her.

The narrative does not allow Aris, the character, to escape lightly, and therefore, Aris, the narrator, is forced to reassert his uncertainty as a created object, by telling the story of how he turned to the fictional reality of books, because of his inability to read the reality behind Christina's enigma. At the time, the only communication between Aris and Christina passes through the silent observations of each other, and because of his metaphorical and literal dependent status, Aris feels a painful need to engage in a real dialogue. He turns to books to satisfy his desire, only to find that,

και εκεί δεν έβρισκα τον ορθόδοξο διάλογο, όπου πομπός και δέκτης συγκλίνουν. Συναντούσα μιά λειτουργία άνιση. Εγώ δεχόμουν επιδράσεις, μα το βιβλίο τίποτα δεν έπαιρνε από εμένα, έμενε παθητικό, αιχμάλωτο της τόλμης που κάποτε το έφτιαξε[...] Χρειαζόταν να ηρεμήσω για να παραδεχτώ πως η παθητικότητα ήταν λάθος εκτίμηση, πως οι συγκεκριμένες λέξεις, οι περασμένες στα χαρτιά, δεν καθήλωναν ποτέ τις έννοιες, τις άφηναν διάφανες, ρευστές, να περιμένουν το

βλέμμα που θα τους δώσει σχήμα. Χρειαζόταν να περάσει ώρα πολλή για να καταλάβω πως πομπός ήμουν ουσιαστικά εγώ και το βιβλίο ο υπνωμένος δέκτης που πάντα ονειρεύεται τη διέγερση. (54)

Aris, as the text that Eva had intended him to be, emerges from the illusion of being the active reader of Christina's life text, and with his status as object restored, is once again reminded that in fact he is not only being constantly read by Christina, but is indeed dependent solely upon her reading of him to emerge from a state of inactivity and nonexistence.

Gradually finding that Christina's penetrative effect on him becomes unbearable, Aris starts to leave Christina every summer during his school years, his worries about her state of mind in his absence pacified by her reassurance that "Κάθε απουσία είναι ευχάριστη, όταν είναι προσωρινή[...]"(57) and by the fact that when he returns to their home he finds that during his three-month absence she has produced as many sculptures as she normally would for the rest of the year.

When he announces his decision to leave permanently, a devastated Christina tries to tempt him to stay by promising that she will confine herself to the studio, that she will become a 'silent shadow'. At this point, the discussion of presence-absence becomes, really, a discussion about the state of Aris' existence. What Aris objects to, is the idea of Christina as an "αίσθηση" that will permanently reaffirm his status as object, as a dependent, helpless entity, constantly violated by the power of an invisible presence which "θα περνούσε τους τοίχους, θα περπατούσε

στα πατώματα, θα έτρεχε στους διαδρόμους και, πάντα αθέατη, θα παρακολουθούσε τις ασήμαντες κινήσεις, τις αδιόρατες μεταπτώσεις μου"(58). Thus, Aris decides that the only way to escape the violation which transforms him either into the inexorably hunted game, or the textual construction constantly read by another, will be to deny Christina the opportunity to go after him by depriving her life of his presence as a "θήραμα"(58).

Christina manifests her adaptation to Aris' refusal to be subjected to her desires in a powerful way. She denies Aris the opportunity to make a heroic exit from being the centre of her attentions by reversing the wording of her previous gnomic statement (57), saying that it is time he went because "Κάθε παρουσία είναι δυσάρεστη, όταν είναι προσωρινή"(59), and immediately returning to her sculpting, treating the still present Aris as already absent.

Since Christina produces her art irrespective of Aris' temporary absence, the idea that his animate presence has been essential and central to her artistic endeavours becomes invalid. It also suggests that Christina's choice to assert her existence through her obsessive devotion to the production of inanimate sculptures, which Aris considers pointless, is in fact an independent activity, successful and well aimed to the satisfaction of her individual needs. Even in the case of his relationship to Christina, Aris' subjectivity cannot escape relegation to a status similar to that of an artistic creation, its dependence exposed both in terms of existence and of definition.

5. 4. Mario's Modelling

Aris recognizes Mario, the Greek-Italian model who temporarily absorbed Christina's creative attentions, as a major formative thrust in his adolescence. Mario travelled around the world using his body "σαν ευγενικό εμπόρευμα ή όπως ο ίδιος έλεγε ειρωνικά, σαν μικρή προσφορά στο βωμό της μεγάλης τέχνης"(25). Posing nude for a sculpture, he depends upon Christina's directions and desires in order to assume a position over which he has no control, waiting patiently until the artist makes a decision. The pose, "στάση", that Mario is forced to take, although impeccable, always seems 'unnatural' to the observing Aris, because "ήξερα πως δεν ήταν δική του, και πως, κατά βάθος, τον ταπείνωνε"(25).

Aris interprets Mario's self-humiliation and willingness to submit to Christina's commands and demands as a bravely subversive rebellion against her authoritarian attitude. At the time, Aris is trying to find a way to escape his own objectification by Christina, and it is only through drawing courage from Mario's presence, as well as from Mario's ideological stance against adaptability, that he is finally able to leave her.

The argument that arms Aris with the final certainty in his conviction to become independent, is voiced in the narrative by Mario, who, during a modelling session, comes out of his unnatural posture, and in Aris' eyes, becomes himself, to present

his views against the virtues of adaptability put forth by Christina:

Φανταζόταν ανθρώπους χαμαιλέοντες να χρωματίζονται από τα ρεύματα των καιρών, μετά να χάνονται άδοξα, σε άνοστα πλήθη. Προτιμούσε τους φυλακισμένους στα τείχη μιάς προσωπικότητας δύσκαμπτης, αυτόνομης, προορισμένης να απωθεί, να καταστρέφει (26).

It is interesting that the metaphor employed to belittle Christina's position by linking individuals to chameleons, comes from a man who has made adaptability to the demands of the environment a profession. Mario's pointing at the ability of certain animals to change colour to fit the surrounding environment, uses the allusion to the natural to inscribe resistance to a social imperative voiced by Christina. In so doing, the narrative also links his comment to the title of the novel, whose implications in Aris' mind formulate the possible colour of his future.

Thus, Mario's anti-chameleonic position dominates Aris' thoughts, when he gradually takes on the role of teacher for Aris, visiting the studio repeatedly, even after Christina has stopped experimenting with the human figure and Mario's modelling has become obsolete for her.

In the studio where Christina moulds the vague shapes of hard materials into definite forms of art, Mario's speeches are moulding Aris' love for the unconventional by disclosing to him attractive, unknown possibilities: "Δεν μιλούσε τόσο όσο με δίδασκε[...] υπόγεια μου χάριζε κάτι πολύτιμο. Μου άνοιγε τους δρόμους

στο αντισυμβατικό, στο εξωθητικό"(27). As a preview of the analogy between death and texts that will become more apparent later, the end of the relationship of Aris and Mario is contained in the narrative in terms of a death reported by a text.

Years after Mario has left for Finland, news of his death comes to Aris through a registered letter, sent by an anonymous correspondent. The man writes that Mario had mysteriously set fire to himself on the roof of an apartment building in Argentina and that Aris' address was the only real reference found among the personal belongings of the deceased. Giving few other details about the speculation concerning the reason for Mario's action, the unknown writer of the letter also informs Aris that the painter for whom Mario worked at the time, despite the fact that his studio was six kilometres away from the locus of Mario's suicide, has given the police a detailed explanation of Mario's last moments, testifying that for the past two days "ο αυτόχειρας είχε βυθιστεί σε μιά γαλήνια σιωπή, σε κάποια ευεργετική ανάταση. Καί όταν ήρθε εκείνη η στιγμή, της σπάνιας έξαρσης, θέλησε να την παρατείνει αιώνια. Τότε άλειψε το κορμί του με βενζίνη.[...] Ο άνθρωπος αυτός επιθυμούσε μια εκρηκτική ένωση με το σύμπαν καταλαβαίνετε;"(28).

The Argentinian painter's assured account of a reality he had not witnessed, as reported and thereby interpreted by the mysterious writer of the letter, is based on the conviction that one does not need to see to know, because "η όραση πάντα παραπλανά, η ενδόμυχη πεποίθηση ποτέ όμως"(28). Aris embraces that conviction because on the one hand it is connected, though

indirectly, to Mario's teachings, and on the other hand it allows him to set his own "ενδόμυχη πεποίθηση", what his own 'I' tells him, as the stable measure of reality, over and above the limits of visual impression of the 'eye' which provides one with only a fraction of the total reality of the "αβίαστη γλώσσα των πραγμάτων" (33) in a world that is constantly changing around him.

As Mario's strange death becomes a theme which enters texts and generates interpretations, just as his body had done when alive, his subjectivity resists the advent of a final closure of meaning. Thus Aris, following his newly found inner conviction, decides that in the future the only way he will associate himself with his environment is through what Mario has taught him by his death: his 'I' protected from all alienating emotional and practical demands made by other people. Having adopted Mario's discursive position as a firm ideological stand, we find him narrating how years later, while in the process of selling Eva's inheritance to finance his second journey to Geneva, he has, because of what Mario had taught him, been able to avoid and resist Elsa's invasive and strategically chameleonic advances.

Elsa, who lives next door to Aris' flat, is an actress. Although her professional role-playing is similar to Mario's, it is also marked by a fundamental difference. Whereas Mario never assumed his prescribed poses as natural, Elsa, in Aris' eyes, is completely the opposite: "η ηθοποιούσα την είχε μάθει να ελέγχει την έκφραση, την κίνηση, τη στάση, τόσο επιδέξια, ώστε το επίκτητο γινόταν φύση"(36). Whereas Mario's voluntary flexibility was never the

cause of deception or oppression, Elsa's transformational abilities are used repeatedly to disguise her persistence in approaching Aris and invading his space.

Aris thinks that the driving force behind Elsa's coming to his flat at nights is a blind submission to a primordial sexual instinct, to which he himself readily succumbs but with all his perceptive powers fully alert. Thus, when one night Elsa touches his hand for what he considers to be a more prolonged amount of time than usual, he sees in her action the first signs of a conquest: "η αρχή της αρπαγής, της κατάκτησης. Το τράβηξα απότομα, σηκώθηκα όρθιος. Της μίλησα ψύχραιμα. Είπα πως έβλεπα τη στρατηγική της, μαλακά προσπαθούσε να με οδηγήσει στις αποχρώσεις της εξάρτησης"(37).

When Elsa claims that through their love-making a part of him has already been tied to her, he argues against dependence to any one relationship that requires conformity, and explains that he will keep clearly away from chameleonic adaptations, his individuality securely guarded, "δύσκαμπτη, αυτόνομη"(26), as Mario had taught him.

As soon as he finishes the argument in defence of his independence, his inner thoughts are thrown into confusion. He remembers that he cannot rationally account for the fact that, although confident in his pursuit of an independent subject position, he had a few years ago gladly surrendered the freedom of his 'I' by entering a relationship with a woman who had become his sole focus: "Αλλά τότε, λίγα χρόνια πριν, πώς μπόρεσα; Πώς

χάθηκα, πώς έμεινα ακίνητος...πώς μπόρεσα τότε, εγώ ήμουν, μόνο εγώ, δεν έχω αμφιβολίες" (37).

This total surrender refers to Aris' love affair with Jill, in whose turquoise eyes he had lost himself for two years, inexplicably unable to uphold Mario's teachings that he now proposes to Elsa as the inviolable premise of his inner convictions. Aris has already modelled himself on Mario, and in so doing, he readily plays the role that Mario has written for him, in order to avoid becoming a co-player in a relationship with the actress, Elsa. He contradicts himself because, on the one hand and by his own admission, the actress has approached him through a "τυφλή υποταγή στο ένστικτο"(36), that is, as her uncontrolled natural self. On the other hand, he appears to be acting out his role-playing, and paradoxically equates himself with the criticism he had previously directed towards Elsa, that she exercised such strict self-control "ώστε το επίκτητο γινόταν φύση"(36).

Although Mario and Elsa, in relation to the artistic processes in which they are involved, are both set out in the narrative as willingly going in and out of the subject positions produced for them by other people's texts, when it comes to the kind of relationship Aris has with each of them a clearly evaluative distinction surfaces. Since both Mario and Elsa are analogues of textual subjects, and since Aris is himself a textual analogue (of his subjectivity as produced by the discourse of his narration about himself), the relationship that

he can have with them can only be an intertextual one. Whereas Mario, as text, offers Aris, as text, a relationship "προορισμένη να απωθεί, να καταστρέφει"(26) all kinds of interdependence, in which they can both retain their individual "δύσκαμπτη, αυτόνομη"(36) concrete subjectivity, Elsa, as text, offers Aris as text, the exact opposite. Here is a relationship of total interdependence in which each subject position takes something from and adapts to the other by simply coming in contact with it. Aris regards Elsa's proposition of interdependence as "το βαθμιαίο σβήσιμο της αθωότητας"(36) in their relationship; this innocence must lie in the belief that one's subjectivity, even when relegated to the status of a textual production, can still have an independent and concrete existence in its own right; and it is this belief in the innocent existence of the text that Jill stands for in Aris' narrative, a metaphor that explains how in the past he had allowed himself to be lost in Jill's text, "στο ένα που παράλογα έγινε μοναδικό".

5. 5. Modelling Jill

Aris describes his life immediately before he met Jill as suffocating in a situation that could be summarized by Elsa's subsequent assertion that "ο άνθρωπος δεν είναι σύνολο, είναι σύστημα, γι' αυτό οι αλλοιώσεις ενός στοιχείου του επηρεάζουν όλα τα άλλα"(37), which had made Aris feel that "οι κύκλοι των αλλοτριώσεων μου έφερναν πια ασφυξία, δεν ήξερα από τι να φυλαχτώ και τι να προστατέψω, ήμουν ο δέσμιος ενός σύνθετου οργανισμού και, για να τον χτυπήσω, έπρεπε να μεταχειριστώ τα μέσα του, έψαχνα ανανεώσεις

κινούμενος στα όρια του παλιού..."(103). One day, trying to escape his anxieties by racing his motorcycle, he focuses on the transparent turquoise coloured eyes of a girl and is forced to stop. When the girl simply says in an American accent "Hi! I'm Jill", that focus becomes permanent for Aris during the following two years.

The presence of Jill in the narrative is constructed to stand as an analogue for a textual presence that Aris himself has created. The status of Jill as Aris' text becomes clearer when he reports that "όλα ξεκίνησαν από ένα αστείο. Γιατί ήταν αστείο όταν της είπα: Το ξέρω καλά πώς είσαι η Τζιλλ"(104). After giving her a name, he claims that he, inferring from the social connotations of her life-style and nationality, can effortlessly tell her what kind of plants were growing in her garden as well as the reasons why these plants existed there: "Ήταν η αμερικανίδα του τζόκινγκ και του σκί, η κηπουρική θα την παρέσυρε σαράντα χρόνια αργότερα"(105). As if he has already created the outline of the text in which Jill would be the protagonist, he finds it impossible to let the opportunity go, and, hypnotized by her turquoise eyes, he returns to her house the very next day and resumes the creation of his story about her. As Aris says, Jill "δεν με δεχόταν ούτε με ευχαρίστηση ούτε με δυσαρέσκεια. Με δεχόταν φυσικά". Jill as a metaphor for Aris' text, at this early stage of her creation, is not in a position to react to his desires and appears as passive and indifferent as she is on a literal level.

He records a dialogue that typifies the nature of their relationship, and shows Jill, as the text in the making, not yet in a position to claim independence and answer back:

- Είναι ηλίθια...
- What did you say? ρώτησε η Τζίλλ κι εγώ απάντησα:
- Nothing...I was talking to myself.(106)

Whereas his thoughts, finding no reception from Jill, return to Aris in their entirety, engaging him in a dialogue with himself, his physical side, contrastingly, becomes more and more drawn into the turquoise of her eyes, so that after each passionate lovemaking scene he feels "υποδιαίρεση του εαυτού μου, κάτι από μένα είχε μείνει εκεί, στο άσπρο δέρμα με τον τυρκουάζ ηλεκτρισμό"(107). Losing part of his self to Jill involuntarily does not present any threat to Aris (as it would do later in the case of Elsa) and giving himself up totally to the fatal attraction of creating his own text, he sells all his things and goes to stay with Jill, adapting himself, like a chameleon, to her environment: "το όλο έγινε ένα, το σύμπαν συγκεντρώθηκε στο άσπρο δέρμα με τους τυρκουάζ ηλεκτρισμούς"(107). The whole reality of Aris' life concentrates on Jill, and he becomes at the time defined by his relationship to her, free of the tyranny of his past which had prescribed his dependent subjectivity. Feeling that "η μέθη του παρόντος με είχε τόσο αποξενώσει από το παρελθόν[...]τίποτα ασύνδετο με την Τζίλλ δεν μπορούσε να με αντιπροσωπεύει"(110), he concentrates on enjoying his challenging newfound role.

Aris discovers that understanding Jill, and on a metafictional level creating Jill, is not an easy task. He has to treat Jill tenderly as well as make himself go through the "απροσδόκητες αυτές λογικές υποχωρήσεις"(121) in order not to destroy their difficulty in communicating with each other. It is precisely this factor which makes the relationship attractive to Aris since it demands constant renewal and re-invention of codes in the quest for a complete rapprochement.

The only tangible element on which a dialogue between them can be based comes from their repeatedly pronouncing each other's names, an activity which is supposed to send out an infinite amount of different shades of messages. Aris calls this illusion of communication a "ψευδαισθηση". It lasts as long as their passionate lovemaking, and afterwards throws Aris into deep uncertainty. When their bodies are not in contact, his mental state returns to its former clarity, so that during those "ώρες της διαύγειας", he rebels against Jill's fraudulence and questions the reality of the "χιλιάδες μηνύματα, μηνύματα τυρκουάζ, που ίσως ποτέ δεν είχε στείλει"(122). On a metaphorical level Aris' uncertainty is due to the fact that as his creation of the persona of Jill is progressing, she is gradually acquiring an existence in her own right, whose relationship with him is unclear whenever the creating process (the love making), over which he was in control, stops.

On a literal level, Aris tries to excuse the lack of communication as a result of his poor command of Jill's

language, and decides to improve his English. The decision is based on the patronizing position that he feels sorry for Jill, who, unable to speak any other language, is imprisoned "σε ένα και μοναδικό σύστημα γλώσσας και σκέψης"(123). In the past, disguising his own inadequacy behind a concern for the protection of another, Aris had felt sorry for both Christina, whom he had accused of "αυτοεγκατάλειψη στις τροχιές μιας και μοναδικής γλώσσας"(52), and Eva about whom he had declared that "τη λυπήθηκα - όχι από αλτρονισμό, άλλωστε ο οίκτος είναι μια μορφή αυτοπροστασίας ή προστασίας του είδους"(67), a gnomic statement that he now repeats in relation to Jill, adding to it a metafictional twist: "ο οίκτος δεν είναι απλώς μια μορφή αυτοπροστασίας ή προστασίας του είδους, είναι και μια τέλεια μέθοδος αυτοκαταστροφής"(123). Protecting himself, Aris feels sorry for his creation, but by protecting the creation over which he has total control while it is being made, he allows it to become complete and therefore claim an independence which will put an end to his controlling role as creator. Thus, on a metafictional level, Aris' protection of his text paves the way for his eventual self-destruction, his death by writing.

As Jill, the subject of Aris' text, continues to grow, her existence requires him less and less, and the possibility of a closer relationship between them becomes all the more remote. Aris attributes the lack of communication to Jill's stupidity, which he repeatedly and unsuccessfully tries to eradicate by challenging her to engage in the development of his own thoughts. Since Jill never gives Aris any sign of response, he

begins to think that what he considers her stupidity is in reality a form of higher intelligence whose operations he cannot understand by means of the limited thought processes available to him. He assumes that this fundamental difference is the reason behind their having radically opposed conceptions of life, "εγώ μόνιμα δυσареστημένος σε αναζητήσεις αμφίβολες, εκείνη μόνιμα ευτυχισμένη από το γεγονός της ύπαρξής της"(123). In that sense, Jill, as the subject of Aris' text, appears to be enjoying her existence which would not be possible without Aris' intervention, whereas Aris, who is responsible for her existence, is agonizing about being affected by the task of creating it.

Aris is aware that because of the difference between their roles there will come a time when they part for ever and, therefore, he literally immerses himself in her, enjoying her as long as she is available: "την παρέσυρα λοιπόν στα μαξιλάρια και βυθίζομαι μέσα της για ώρες. Όχι πια για την ηδονή, μα για την ένωση. Προσωρινά, η θλίψη μου έσβυνε, ψευδαισθησιακά ένιωθα πως σβήνει η θλίψη όλης της ανθρωπότητας, εκείνης που υπάρχει, εκείνης που χάθηκε και εκείνης που θα έρθει"(124). The act of creating a text, where the creator is in direct contact with the subject of his text, is enough to obliterate the sum of all the past, present and future anxieties of Aris, who, by putting Jill in the position of the subject of his text, is temporarily securing a stable representation of his own subjectivity as well. He declares at the time, "τίποτα ασύνδετο με την Τζίλλ δεν μπορούσε να με αντιπροσωπεύει"(110).

The fragility and the temporariness of his hold on their relationship is manifested when Jill, as the subject of Aris' text, has grown enough to exist in her own right, and her presence becomes increasingly independent, so that she resists a total conquest during the moments of love-making:

[...]ποθούσα να με αγγίξει, όπως την άγγιζα κι εγώ. Δεν το έκανε ποτέ! Τις στιγμές του έρωτα γινόταν η φυσική μου συνέχεια, μα τις υπόλοιπες επέμενε σε μιά σωματική αυθυπαρξία[...] Ήταν η Τζίλλ, ζούσαμε περισσότερο από ένα χρόνο μαζί, αλλά την ένιωθα τόσο απαγορευμένη! (154).

It is precisely the forbidding barrier that Jill imposes that keeps Aris with her for so long. Whereas Christina and Elsa had both demanded that their relationship with him was one of eternal interdependence by making Aris the subject of their texts, Jill, who is designed to mirror his own desire for independence as the subject of his own text, demands that the distance between creator and creation should become infinite. Aris, declares that since "τα απαγορευμένα της Τζίλλ με κρατούσαν αιχμάλωτο εκεί [...] είχα παραιτηθεί από την κριτική. Τώρα αγωνιούσα!"(154), and reports that from that moment on he will devote his time to intensely observing how Jill was preparing her departure.

He gives himself totally to the temporariness of Jill's presence, to what Christina had rejected, by saying that 'every presence is unpleasant when temporary', realizing that his impact on her had been immense, since, despite Jill's original plans to enrich her knowledge of Greece and its archaeology,

"στην πραγματικότητα τίποτα από τα δυο δεν έκανε, γνώρισε μόνο εμένα"(154). Jill, however, is shown to have had an equally strong impact on Aris' life as well, since by now her "τυρκουάζ περνούσε μέσα μου κι όταν είχα τα μάτια κλειστά"(155).

As was the case with the news of Mario's death, the death of Jill's relationship to Aris is reported through a text. Jill is described as organizing her departure "αθόρυβα και σιωπηλά"(156) by noting its details on a writing pad, which she leaves around the house for Aris to look at, waiting for him to intervene and prevent the forthcoming separation. Since Jill communicates her future plans to Aris through the text on the writing pad, she metaphorically dictates that his options for stopping her exit from the story will have to pass through that same text. Aris can either tear the text to pieces and eliminate Jill's chance to depart by leaving her story unfinished, or he can enter the text about her and follow her planned journey. In so doing, he can provide a different end to their story, whereby they will travel around the world together, happily and permanently. Nevertheless, the thought of keeping the physical presence of Jill with him for ever is never an option for Aris because he does not want to sacrifice his original conception of Jill's subjective position, which he has created as the reflection of his own desire for a free and independent existence. This is done in the name of the certainty of a reassuring stability of life of mutual imprisonment, built on the common logic of ordinary people, or conventional 'artistic creators', who regard the future existence of their creations as proof of the reality and certainty of their

own existence. Aris finally lets Jill go on the level of the story, but he does not let go of her on the level of the narrative. He sacrifices her independent existence to the imprisonment of communicating the story about her to the reader of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* in the form of a manuscript written on the journey to Geneva.

Aris' love affair with Jill is the only one that Aris describes in length in his narrative, and as such it stands as the analogue of Aris' flirtation with the process of producing his own textual creation. Her physical absence from the rest of Aris' life story does not mean that the implications of this relationship reached an end with Jill's departure. Aris holds on to the presence of the 'idea of Jill' he himself has constructed, and it becomes part of his fiction *in absentia* in the first place. The turquoise of Jill's eyes occurs recurrently in the rest of the narrative, as the only stable and pleasant memory to which Aris repeatedly refers, in order to assert the only presence whose real existence in his past life he can report with certainty. In essence, the existence of Aris' regret for his separation from Jill, both on a literal and on a metafictional level, becomes the only stable reference in the narrative for Aris to base the real dimension of his own existence (a situation he had deplored in the case of Christina and Elsa). He declares that despite the loss of Jill, the optimistic turquoise of her eyes remains the main force that connects him to the sum of his life history, through the painful memory of his separation from its presence which resulted in an

"ειδική θλίψη μετά τους έρωτες που με ένωνε με το παρόν, το μέλλον και το παρελθόν" (157).

Aris' text about himself, written on his way to Geneva as an effort to settle once and for all the competing contradictions of the reality of his past life, revolves around his relationship to Jill. The relationship is carefully constructed to stand as a reality to which he can personally testify, leaving little room for one to doubt that Jill's eyes, whose colour permeated him deeply, are not really turquoise. Jill, however, is subjected to Aris' text. She is not real and her eyes are not really the colour that Aris thought they were. Consequently, Aris' subjectivity, which depends upon the fictional creation of Jill for its definition, becomes a textual effect of the narrative which provides that devastating revelation. It becomes clear, therefore, that in terms of the discourse of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, the communication between the characters of the narrative, despite being described, as in the case of Aris and Jill, as particular, unique and special to them only, is in fact a metafictional analogue of the interdependent relationship in the communication between texts and subjects in general.

5. 6. Pavlos, Boris and the Fatal Attraction

Apart from Aris (as a metaphorical writer), the narrative provides two other characters as literal authors of texts: Pavlos, who still writes literature, and the journalist who used to write articles. In this novel, where there is a text there has to be an analogue for its subject, and the narrative presents each man

involved with another person in modes of communication described as being equally unique as Aris' own to Jill. As Aris becomes closely involved with both men and their work, his relationship to literature, and texts in general, is explored in terms of the competing versions of reality in the story of his life. It is also done on the metafictional level of the narrative's discursive position on notions of reality, subjectivity, textuality, and death that were introduced through the story of Jill.

Pavlos has been Eva's lover for quite a while when Aris briefly meets him for the first time and finds out that the main relationship in Pavlos' life is the one he has with Boris, whom he had met by chance in Russia during the war. After his hometown had been bombed, Pavlos, a child at the time, was crying over his dead dog when a man came, grabbed his arm and forced him to run, promising that as soon as the dog woke up they would come back to get it. Pavlos admits that after that "τον ακολούθησε καθυσχυασμένος κι ενθουσιάστηκε μόλις έμαθε πως το όνομά του ήταν Μπόρις. Έτσι έλεγαν και το σκύλο! "(16). Although Boris' and Pavlos' relationship was based on a lie, they never separated and they eventually came to Athens where Boris took care of Pavlos, comforting him during his school years, when he had to confront the hostility of cruel classmates "σε μια γλώσσα που δεν ήταν ακόμα η δική του"(16).

Aris remarks that "το περιστατικό με το σκύλο θυμίζει φιλμ αντιπολεμικής προπαγάνδας"(16)⁵ and therefore the relationship of Pavlos and Boris becomes fictional, like something in a script, part of the narrative of a visual text. Moreover, since their relationship was initially based on Pavlos' acquisition and mastery of language skills through Boris, in a Lacanian sense it becomes the locus in which the subject is defined in relation to the other, desiring to be loved and recognized in its own right by that other. This demands 'an unconditional yes', total approval which will guarantee the continuation of its existence. Aris records in his "notes" that Pavlos could never abandon Boris, not because of gratitude, for he knew that "η προσφορά επιστρέφει στον δότη σαν αίσθηση υπεροχής" and therefore "η θυσία είναι έννοια ύποπτη"(16), but because he loved him, and because Boris satisfied his desire for the 'unconditional yes'. As Pavlos explains, Boris is the only person who reminds him of his origins, who defines and guarantees his existence: "σχηματοποιούσε την αοριστία της ύπαρξής του, γινόταν ο μικρός κρίκος ανάμεσα στις γενιές που τρέχουν και διακλαδώνονται πάνω στη γη, μέσα στο χρόνο..."(17). Similarly, on a metafictional level, Boris is an

⁵ This brings to mind the anti-war film *Jeux Interdits* directed by François Truffaut, where, in a similar scene that takes place during the fierce German bombardement of a small French country road, a girl's dog is killed but she carries it with her thinking that it is asleep. She is found lying beside her pet by a boy who persuades her to follow him to the safety of his parents' house, promising to come back for the dog later.

analogue for Pavlos' literature, in which his subjectivity is inscribed through an almost religious communication between subject and text, restricted to them only, and as forbidden to outsiders as the one Aris had with Jill:

ο Παύλος δεν ήταν γι' αυτόν πόλος αφοσίωσης ούτε τρόπος και λόγος ύπαρξης, αλλά μιά ιδιόρρυθμη, ιδιωτική θρησκεία. Μιά θρησκεία που διανοητικά οπωσδήποτε τον ξεκούραζε, στην πράξη όμως τού επέβαλλε μιά σειρά από σκληρές απαγορεύσεις.

Γιατί απαγορευμένη πρέπει να ένωθε την ασχολία με οποιονδήποτε άλλον, εκτός από εκείνον, το αντικείμενο της λατρείας του. (17)

Because of Pavlos' close relationship with Boris, anyone who is associated with him is forced into trying to forge a connection with Boris as well, a task doomed to failure since Boris only responds to Pavlos.

On the level of the story, Aris attributes the fact that Boris never gave any sign of acknowledging his own presence to the exclusive relationship of religious devotion between the two men "πώς αλλιώς να εξηγήσω το ότι ποτέ δεν μου απευθύνθηκε, ποτέ δεν έδειξε να αντιλαμβάνεται την παρουσία μου..."(17).

The relationship of Aris to Boris in the narrative therefore remains typical of their first meeting, when after the neutral introduction that Pavlos made, he had approached Boris with interest. Boris, on the other hand, had immediately distanced himself. Aris was not annoyed at the time because "δαισθάνθηκα πως ήμουν γι' αυτόν ανύπαρκτος, όχι παρείσακτος"(17). Excusing his marginalization by choosing to believe that he simply falls

outside the field of Boris' 'eye', not that he is rejected by his 'I', he therefore feels free to enjoy being the observer in this case: "η κατάσταση μου χάριζε μια αίσθηση καινούργια, την αίσθηση του αόρατου. Υπήρχε ένα διάφανο γυαλί, ένα γυαλί που απ' τη μεριά του Μπόρις ήταν σκούρο, εγώ όμως, ανενόχλητος, μπορούσα να τον παρακολουθώ"(18).

Through what amounts to a one-way observation glass Aris enjoys the new found freedom of invisibility, and sets out to decipher Boris' presence, listening to Boris' voice and trying to interpret the unviolable language codes that he and Pavlos use to communicate. Aris' observations can never be conclusive, because he cannot see Boris' face, since he always chooses to sit in the dark during his brief appearances. The only real impression he actually obtains is of a *version* of Boris, that of his complexion which is very pale, and of the dark clothes he always wears. Following the observation that Boris displays a "παραίτηση[...] από το διάλογο με τα χρώματα, [...] συμφιλίωση με κάποιο τέλος"(18), Aris thinks that his death is long overdue, and after that "απροσδόκητα η παρουσία του Μπόρις έγινε οδυνηρή"(18), threatening Aris with its offensive indestructibility.

He tries to use the state of invisible non-existence, to which Boris' inexplicability has relegated him, as a means to avoid coming into contact with him: "Αρνιόμουν πια να χρησιμοποιώ τη διάφανη όψη τού γυαλιού, αρνιόμουν την ιδιότητά μου του αόρατου"(19). The presence of the dark figure that Boris has become in Aris' eyes is an overpowering one, one that needs to disappear in order for rational thinking to return to its normal

functional level. Although Aris had previously said that "Μετά από κάθε μου συνάντηση με τον Μπόρις, χρειαζόταν να κοπιάσω πολύ για να ξεχάσω πως είχα παραβιασθεί"(14), he now realises that "χρειαζόταν να απομακρυνθεί η σκούρα σιλουέττα, για να θυμηθώ"(19). It emerges that, ever since Aris met Boris, the reliability of his sense impressions has been thrown into question, and control of both remembrance and forgetting has become dependent on Boris, since even when Boris is physically absent, his presence is still permeating Aris' state of mind: "ωστόσο, κι όταν έλειπε ο Μπόρις δεν ηρεμούσα. Προσπαθούσα να αφουγκραστώ τις κινήσεις του στο βάθος του σπιτιού, φοβόμουν πως κάθε στιγμή μπορούσε να σταθεί απειλητικά στην πόρτα και η συνεχής αναμονή μου έφθειρε το παρόν[...] Η απουσία του Μπόρις είχε πια γίνει το ίδιο οδυνηρή με την παρουσία του, ίσως και περισσότερο, γιατί ο συνδυασμός αναμονής και φαντασίας διογκώνει καταστάσεις"(19). Aris, defined thus not only as the non-observing subject, but also as the observed object in agony, becomes obsessed with Boris.

Boris becomes for Aris a symbol of his own death. Because of refusing to acknowledge Aris' presence, he refuses the acceptance which will attest to his existence. Further, by subjecting Aris' permanent symbolic death to the imminence of his own physical one, he forbids him any notion of self control, foregrounding his inescapable end. Aris' quest in his relationship with Boris becomes a race against death, whose outcome remains inconclusive, both on a metaphorical and on a literal level. On the level of the story, Aris remains fully alert, in a sensory sense, observing Boris' gradual waning. On the last day

of the excursion to Pavlos' house he manages to look closely at Boris' face and realises that he is dead, only to have his conviction crushed by Pavlos, who dismisses it as a hallucination. On a metaphorical level, Aris' quest turns against his own symbolic death, which can only be satisfied if he manages to 'see' Boris' real face and thus kill him in order to continue existing independently of Boris' approval. But this quest is not concluded, because through Pavlos' refusal to agree with Aris' view that Boris is dead, what Aris is left with in the end is yet another version of Boris' impenetrable and mysterious existence.

Since Boris stands as an analogue of Pavlos' literature, the only way for Aris to provide himself with a stable definition of Boris' 'face' is through reading the texts that Pavlos wrote. Aris resents Pavlos' literary endeavours because he considers literature an oppressive convention of Western civilization, and he resents Pavlos' representing the operation through which he becomes one of those people, a professional writer, whom Aris dismisses as deceitful: "μιλούσαν για αγνή κι αμόλυντη ανάγκη για έκφραση και πολύ σπάνια παραδέχονταν πως έπαιζαν σ' ένα συνηθισμένο παιχνίδι κυριαρχίας και επιβολής"(88). Pavlos, who wrote essays, novels, and short stories, and had them printed and circulated commercially, becomes a prime suspect for Aris, despite Eva's protestation that Pavlos' texts are different because "οι λόγοι που τον οδήγησαν στα γραπτά είναι ερεθιστικοί"(88) both in terms of his jail experience and in terms of the conviction for fraud that put him there.

Aris' regarding of literature as a kind of fraud is metaphorically sustained through his conversations with Eva about Pavlos' experiences. Eva is intrigued by the fact that Pavlos had spent six years in jail, alone in a dark cell, observing the rhythm of his breathing, listening to his heartbeat and watching the miniscule daily growth of his nails. She also admires the fact that he has been imprisoned because of "μια κοινή, κοινότατη απάτη, με σκοπό το κέρδος"(90), and has defied the system for personal gain. Eva's assertion that "Ο πολιτικός κατάδικος αμφισβητεί μόνο ένα σύστημα, ενώ ο ποινικός τα πάντα!"(91) is an attitude that defines Pavlos, in the eyes of Eva, as the epitome of the subversive individual.

Aris dismisses Eva's admiration of Pavlos' "εμπειρία της ακινησίας" and self-abandonment "στο κενό, στο τίποτα" by arguing that "το «τίποτα» αυτό είναι κάτι" since "τρόποι ζωής δεν είναι μόνο οι καθιερωμένοι, οι μαζικοί, αλλά και οι αδοκίμαστοι και οι αδιανόητοι ακόμη"(89). Furthermore, Aris objects to Pavlos' compromising of his subversive experience of immobility which he imprisoned "στο συντηρητισμό της έκδοσης"(89), since his literal movement, necessary to put his story in writing, marks the beginning of the end of the particularity of his own image by engaging it "στους χώρους και με τους τρόπους των πολλών"(90).

As is metafictionally appropriate in terms of the narrative, Pavlos' decision to destroy the "εμπειρία της ακινησίας" when he got out of jail was triggered by Boris, who intervened to force him out of inaction. In Aris' mind, it is through Boris' feeding Pavlos'

frailty with his language codes that Pavlos produces texts which become synonymous with fraud. It can be said, therefore, that the narrative's discursive position on literature is one of fraudulence. For, its "αθέατες μηχανογραφίες" are shown by Aris to rely on the unsuspecting reader's "πλάγια χρήση της πίστης και της αφέλειας"(90).

As a first sign of the narrative's position on the inescapability of language codes, Aris says he never escaped from Pavlos' literature, and even though he never read any of it, he always looked for indirect ways to get information about its content as a possible answer to Pavlos' actions. He asks Pavlos himself about the subject matter of his texts, implicitly wishing to question whether his experiences in jail appear there. Pavlos refuses to comment and, described by Aris "σαν γνήσιος διανοητικός βιαστής", he just gives him his books saying "—Δες μόνος σου, έκανε. Εγώ ό,τι κι αν πω θα τα παραποιήσω"(97). He forces Aris to seek alternative ways of knowing whether Pavlos is the subject of his own literature, without directly subjecting himself to it. Aris' evasive attitude towards Pavlos' texts exemplifies his quest to remain outside the alienating "παιχνίδι κυριαρχίας και επιβολής"(88) that literature generates. The quest for a sovereign subject position undermines itself, because it is revealed to be permeated by and dependent upon those very constraints from which it seeks to liberate itself, having described them as fraudulent. Although Aris refuses to become the reader of Pavlos' texts, he cannot help himself becoming the 'reader' of his life as presented in the novel *Το Χρώμα του μέλλοντος*.

5. 7. A Time of Substitutes

The refusal to become the reader of any text has its roots in Aris' university years. In the beginning, he immerses himself in his studies in an effort to learn as much as possible, only to be left with the "πικρή αίσθηση πως εγώ είχα κατακτηθεί από στέρεες σκέψεις που για ύποπτους λόγους καθιερώθηκαν"(71). The quest for knowledge proves oppressive and he increasingly finds himself to be influenced and continuously constructed in and by the texts that dominated the university canon. He then settles on a compromising substitute by spending his time giving private lessons, doing translations and editions for various publishing firms and working as a waiter in a restaurant at weekends to make ends meet.

Both the private lessons and the editing work further increase Aris' disillusionment and he comes to believe in the fraudulence of literary transmission and reception. He discovers increasingly that the only activity that gives him pleasure and is not painful is waiting at tables. As this activity requires minimal linguistic exchanges. The immediacy and the undeniable reality of providing food puts Aris in a doubly pleasant position: he can satisfy the clients' desire to be fed, while at the same time he can observe the real results of his need-fulfilling actions in the brief intervals between the juggling of plates.

Aris works at the restaurant with Philippos, a fellow student who is considered a genius in university circles. He does

not share Aris' enthusiasm for the job, and is unable to tolerate the abrupt and demanding orders given by clients and proprietor alike, for, unlike Aris, "δεν ήξερε να ειρωνεύεται τις σχέσεις εξουσίας"(73). Apart from describing literature as fraud, Aris has also claimed it is a "παιχνίδι κυριαρχίας και επιβολής". Aris, considering himself in a privileged position to defy the rules and the machinations of that game, decides to protect his friend's vulnerability and introduces him to publishing firms, as his substitute for the editing job, thinking that there he will find suitable solace in literature.

As Philippos becomes more and more indispensable to the publishers, Aris takes on Philippos' waiting responsibilities, which however diminish Aris' opportunity for intervals of observation. Aris, however, creates a new game for himself, and is subjected to the demands of new codes as his main goal becomes to avoid smashing plates in the midst of the necessary juggling and acrobatics required for efficient service. As a player of this game, or as a performer of this script, he focuses his attention on the presence of the restaurant owner, who always sits in a corner at the back as if waiting for him to fail. He manages to be successful until the old man is taken ill, and having lost his main spectator, Aris drops the dishes and visits the sick man at home to concede defeat, only to discover that contrary to what Aris thinks, he has always been uninterested in observing his performance. As has become clear in Aris' narrative, he has always been obsessed by the idea that he is constantly under observation. It is therefore understandable that

even when the old man dies, and although subjection to his inspecting gaze is exposed as Aris' own obsessive illusion, Aris refuses to accept that his real failure concerns his inability to discern reality. Passing in front of the closed restaurant he reinstates the validity of this illusion in his mind, by bidding farewell to the "χαιρέκακο βλέμμα που για μήνες караδοκούσε την ήττα μου"(76). In so doing, he reaffirms the dependence of the definition of his actions on other peoples' gazes and interpretations.

When the job in the restaurant ends, and as Philippos has completely taken over the editing job, Aris is obliged to earn his living only through the "έμψυχο" medium of private lessons. Unable to adjust to the new demands of going from house to house to perpetuate the deceptive knowledge of canonical texts, Aris longs for something that will liberate him from that enforced stability, and turns to Philippos for advice about his impasse. Philippos argues that "οι μηχανισμοί εξαναγκασμού στηρίζονται στην τάση του ανθρώπου να συνηθίζει" and that he is bound to get used to it eventually. Aris counterargues that "η συνήθεια προϋποθέτει κάποια μορφή αποδοχής, αλλιώς μιλάμε για ανάγκη ή πίεση", while Philippos replies, scorning his naivety, that "το μόνο συστατικό της συνήθειας είναι η επανάληψη, πως η αποδοχή δεν χρειάζεται καθόλου"(77).

On the subject of repetition as a condition for acceptance the narrative comments further through Aris' relation to Pavlos' texts. Thus, apart from being unable to accept the necessity of giving private lessons, despite his continued involvement in

them, Aris has also never managed to get used to Pavlos' literature, despite being continuously exposed to its presence. Still determined, however, not to become subjected to Pavlos' texts, but still tormented by the unsatisfied aporia about their content, he decides to use one insupportable situation against another. He discerns a possible solution for both in Martin, one of his pupils. Assuming the role of protector, as he has done with Philippos, he substitutes his own desire by disguising it behind Martin's need to delve into texts in the search for invisible secrets behind the words.

Martin is Aris' most peculiar pupil, because he never plans his tutorials ahead of time and each time appears having borrowed a new philosopher's name "Θαλής και Μάρτιν και Αναξίμανδρος και Πλάτωνας και Οσβαλντ και Φρήντριχ και Εμμάνουελ"(98) because he believed that "τα ονόματα, [...] δεν σημαίνουν τίποτα, φτιάχνονται από αθώες συλλαβές, ωστόσο παραμένουν ηχητικοί προσδιορισμοί που επιβάλλονται, χαρακτηρίζουν [and] δεν άντεχε την απέραντη ετερονομία που λέγεται πραγματικότητα, χρειαζόταν ελεύθερες γωνίες, όπου θα μπορούσε να αναπνέει, να αυτοσχεδιάζει"(98). Martin is however aware that his desire is utopian, since nothing original can ever exist, as the individual expression constantly "εκμηδενίζεται και περιορίζεται σε απλοϊκές μιμήσεις που αποκαλεί γλώσσα ή μουσική, διατηρώντας την ουτοπία της δημιουργίας"(99).

When the admittedly brilliant Martin, who was seeking his autonomy away from the modes of established, dominant logic, suddenly finds himself locked in a mental hospital, Aris thinks

that under the circumstances he can enable him to resume his search in Pavlos' texts, by becoming at the same time Aris' substitute reader.

When Martin, during one of Aris' customary visits to the mental hospital, asks him "ο φίλος σου που έζησε στη φυλακή τι κάνει;"(101) Aris thinks that the time has come to get the proof he needed that Pavlos has commercialized the reality of his jail experience by publishing texts about it. He asks anxiously:

—Γράφει για τη φυλακή στα βιβλία;

—Ούτε λέξη! έκανε ήσυχα. Ομως μιλά με ανοιχτό τρόπο για ανοιχτούς χώρους.

Καί πρόσθεσε γρήγορα:

—Είναι άνισος...Μάλλον δυσπιστεί σ' αυτό που κάνει.

Ετοιμάσθηκα για ένα κύμα ερωτήσεων, αλλά με πρόλαβε:

—Μην ξανάρθεις. Ποτέ ! (101)

The failure of Aris' plan to use Martin as a substitute reader, who would mediate between him and Pavlos' texts, to provide the answers he was looking for, leaves Aris in the same state of uncertainty and dependence as always. Martin, on the other hand, having failed in his attempt to escape from the mental hospital, asks Aris to mediate in order to free him. However, Aris once again chooses not to involve himself directly, and he hires a lawyer as a substitute mediator. The lawyer fails as conclusively as all the other substitutes, and Aris' evasiveness is doubly exposed in terms of Martin, who decides to punish Aris for his lack of involvement by forcibly involving him in a revelation that would destroy the nebulous absurdity that had attracted him to Martin's case in the first

place. On his next visit to the mental hospital, Martin shows Aris his identity card and reveals his real name, the name that the laws of established logic had assigned him, destroying at once his own fiction and the fiction that Aris has created about him. Martin's command, "Είναι η αστυνομική μου ταυτότητα. Διάβασε το όνομά μου!" (103), turns Aris into an active accomplice in the exposition of the real dimension of the fiction surrounding Martin. It commands Aris to become a reader of the fraudulent representation of individuals through the conventional codes of proper names. It also forcibly subjects him not only to the actual knowledge of the 'real' name, but also to the act of transmitting its story through the inscription of the whole incident in his notes.

5. 8. A Time of Subjection

As far as Pavlos and his literature is concerned, Aris has vaguely surmised, through Martin's interpretation, that because Pavlos' subjectivity indirectly underlines the texts he wrote, by the same token it necessarily depends on them for its existence. Aris, determined to keep his own subject position untainted by textual encounters, takes the opportunity offered by the journalist's proposal that he writes articles which will be published under the man's name. Aris engages himself in that process, firmly believing that in so doing, he will expose the fraudulent inevitability, as well as the supposed uniqueness and authenticity, of the compromised interdependence between subjectivity and textuality that Pavlos' literature implies. Aris'

meeting with the journalist through one of his pupils who was the man's brother, begins a peculiar relationship which marks Aris' own immersion in the production of texts written by him, but supposedly from the point of view of someone else's subjectivity. He is thus literally immersed in the very conditions of the metaphorical fraud of representing identity through proper names, enjoying, however, the safety that Martin had forced him to acknowledge.

When the journalist voices his proposal Aris listens amazed to what in the beginning he thought was a joke, but then comes to understand that if he accepts the proposition put to him,

θα ξεκινούσα μια συναρπαστική ιστορία πλαστοπροσωπίας. Γιατί τα άρθρα θα τα έγραφα εγώ, θα δημοσιεύονταν όμως με υπογραφή δική του[...]όλοι οι κίνδυνοι θα βάραιναν αυτόν, τον μόνιμα εκτεθειμένο στην αποτυχία, ενώ εγώ θα ήμουν ασφαλής, προστατευμένος από την ανωνυμία(143).

The proposition of writing someone else's text signifies a state of perfect freedom for Aris, because he will never be obligated to involve his 'I' in the process, since the texts will just have to be the products of the 'eye' of an impersonal writing machine:

Πραγματικά! Τι περισσότερο ζητούσε από μια βιαστική μεταμόσχευση του άυλου; Θα άδειαζα από τον εαυτό μου, θα γέμιζα με μιά σκέψη ξένη, ύστερα σαν επιδέξιος ηθοποιός, θα αυτοσχεδίαζα. Ήταν απλό! (143)

Aris carefully studies the themes that the journalist has chosen to discuss in past articles and finds the whole operation of writing easy because,

έγραφα βασισμένος σε μια σκέψη υποθετική, με στέρηση, με δοσμένους κανόνες[...] Εριχνα γρήγορες ματιές στα κείμενα του εργοδότη μου και διάλεγα στην τύχη λέξεις. Κι όπως κάθε λέξη είναι ένας κόσμος απέραντος, με παρόν και παρελθόν φορτισμένο, το θέμα σχηματιζόταν μόνο του(149).

Having entered a process similar to acting out a role delineated by the strict rules of a screenplay, Aris rejoices in the fictionality of his invented 'I': "ένοιωθα άνετα με τον πλαστό μου εαυτό, επιτέλους με καθοδηγούσαν"(149). The use of the screenplay as a metaphor for a situation of voluntary subjection to someone else's desire, alludes to the distinction between real and constructed subject positions. It also brings forth the other narrative instances of acting out, which concerned Mario and Elsa, as well as Martin, who in a sense, was put in the position of acting as Aris' substitute reader in the elaborate plan to disclose the secrets of Pavlos' texts. Indeed, the metaphor is realized when Aris, having first thought of Mario, chooses to confess his impersonation of the journalist's identity in the midst of a theatrical performance about which Pavlos remarks that "ήταν η ωραιότερη παράσταση της ζωής μου"(149). As Aris has made clear in previous parts of his narrative, however, he strongly believes that there is a clear distinction between different kinds of performance, as in the case of Mario's modelling versus Elsa's acting career. Whereas, as far as the real

performance of the play in the theatre is concerned, he says that "δεν άντεχα την προσπάθεια μαγείας που έπεφτε στο κενό, τη σύμβαση ψεύδους που υπογράμμιζε την ύπαρξή της"(148), he then declares that his metaphorical performance in article writing "για μένα[...] ήταν μιá ωραία παράσταση"(149) acted out according to the script that Mario's life and death generated. In fact, the journalist is indirectly connected with the image of Mario, since his "ανέλπιδη εξέγερση"(141) directly reminds Aris of Mario and his efforts to expand infinitely through self-immolation in Argentina, because the journalist is driven by a similarly exhausting obsession for expansion: "απλωνόταν σε κάθε μορφής έντυπο, εγκαινίαζε αδιάκοπα στήλες καινούργιου τύπου και όσο οι ώρες του περιορίζονταν, αύξαιναν τα ανικανοποίητά του. Ανακάλυπτε τότε το πεπερασμένο του και οργιζόταν"(141). Moreover, he has confessed to Aris that employing him for this job is symptomatic of an underlying crisis he is going through, and which makes it impossible for him to make even the most elementary decision. Being unable to find any reason strong enough to compel him to make up his mind about anything, he dreams instead of setting himself on fire every night.

Aris, by assuming the journalist's point of view, has finally made it possible for his subjectivity to involve itself in an other's demands as voluntarily as Mario had followed Christina's posing directions, having barricaded his own free, undisturbed self behind the textuality of someone else's subjectivity. As he writes more and better articles, the distinction between the 'I' of the journalist and the 'I' of Aris gradually becomes more and

more difficult to make, since his employer enthusiastically talks about the whole operation in the plural "γινόμαστε σήμαντρο, έλεγε. Δίνουμε εγγυήσεις"(150). Aris, who in the beginning had let him "να συγχέει ασυναίσθητα το «εσύ» και το «εγώ», να διασπά το πρόσωπό του, να αναθέτει τμήματά του σε άλλους. Και με έκπληξη ανακάλυπτα πόσο πιο έντονη είναι η δουλειά του μιμούμενου από εκείνη του μιμητή"(150), soon became uncomfortable with the blurring of their shared plural position, on which the journalist enforced an artificial stability by insisting that 'they' should appear to be constant to the theoretical premise of their texts. While Aris wants the 'we' of the arrangement to explore new areas, revolting against the journalist who demands "αιώνια πίστη στη συνταγή των άρθρων «μας»", the use of the singular in the accusation that the journalist "απαιτούσε τη λογική μου ακινησία" shows that Aris' real 'I' has become very attached, if not identical, to his fictional one. In this way, Aris appears to be defined and affected by the very supposition of dependence and unconscious assimilation to another person that he had negated in an earlier part of the narrative: Aris had strongly denied Elsa's assertion that "το παραδεχό[ταν] ή όχι λοιπόν, οι σύντομες ενώσεις [τους] κάτω απ' το πάπλωμα [τον] σφράγιζαν ολόκληρο [...] άρα κάποια μορφή εξάρτησης την είχ[ε] αποκτήσει κιόλας"(37).

In the case of the journalist, as his and Aris' subjectivities become interdependent, the threat implied by the disagreement about the plural or the singular possessive pronoun, and its blurring of the boundaries between each one's bodily and textual 'I', triggers a sense of paranoia that makes each man suspicious

of the other. The journalist starts hiding and meets Aris only in deserted places, coming "σαν ηθοποιός που έκανε άσκηση στον τελευταίο ρόλο του"(152). Aris, acquiring the chameleonic abilities he so despised, follows faithfully: "κάθε φορά προσαρμόζονται ασυναίσθητα κι εγώ στο ύφος του"(153).

The reality behind Aris' involuntary subjection to the journalist's arrangement, in which he had initially involved himself voluntarily, is exposed when, following the directions of the journalist, he flies to Geneva and meets his employer in the agreed bar. When Aris lands in Geneva on the twenty-fourth of May, he remarks that he enjoys having to consult a piece of paper for his next move since thus "η ζωή γινόταν φιλμ αστυνομικό"(173), which foregrounds the imminence of the revelation that he has no control over the role assigned to him, and reminds one of the episode in which, having listened to the story of how Pavlos and Boris met each other, Aris had dismissed its portentous similarity to the script of an anti-war film.

When Aris meets the man at a bar in the old city, he gives him the folder with the latest articles, and as they drink wine, he feels that "κάτι άγνωστο όμως φόρτιζε την ατμόσφαιρα, κάτι άγνωστο που δεν μπορούσα να το εντοπίσω"(174). The journalist tears the articles to pieces and says that he wants to discuss politics in order to confirm his impression that Aris holds the view that politics are a personal matter. Aris is unable to understand how, even though they have never in the past engaged in discussions of each other's opinions, the man can possibly be aware of his

belief that "ο σύγχρονος λόγος για την πολιτική δεν μπορεί να είναι λόγος, αλλά μια σειρά απο βόμβες σε σημεία καίρια"(175). He decides to explore the truth of the matter immediately in a brief but revealing dialogue that exposes the full extent of the illusions Aris is under:

-Και πώς ξέρεις εσύ τι πιστεύω εγώ και τι όχι; ρώτησα επιθετικά.

Γέλασε.

-Τόσους μήνες διαβάζω τα άρθρα σου. Λες να μην ξέρω;

Γέλασα τώρα εγώ.

-Στα άρθρα δεν ήμουν εγώ. Ήσουν εσύ μέσα από μένα.

Ούτε με κοίταξε. Ψιθύρισε όμως:

-Στα άρθρα ήσουν εσύ. Μόνο εσύ, με πρόφαση εμένα.

Τον ειρωνεύθηκα.

-Αν ήμουν εγώ και όχι εσύ, πως τολμούσες να τα δημοσιεύεις με την υπογραφή σου;

Γέμισε πάλι τα ποτήρια με κρασί, σχημάτισε τους κύκλους με καπνό στον αέρα. Και απάντησε με ευκολία που τρόμαζε:

-Ποτέ δεν δημοσίευσα κανένα ! (175)

The revelation that the journalist never published any of the articles that Aris had written, relegates Aris to a position similar to the one he was forced to take when he discovered that Eva had been condemning Christina's sculptures to death through life imprisonment in the dark warehouse. In both cases, Aris appears to have been fooled in his belief that his texts, like Christina's statues, were affecting the world by being appreciated by readers and viewers alike, who marvelled at their ability "να επιδεικνύονται μ' έπαρση"(43). Instead, Aris once again discovers how reality escapes him and is out of his control, even when it concerns not only his senses, but also the fate of his

own unstable creations. Giving up all thoughts of rebellion, Aris asks the journalist for instructions as to his further actions. The man, insisting on using the plural, explains the details of *their* plan to activate a bomb, adding that "αν θέλεις, κανονίζουμε τον τηλεχειρισμό από πολύ κοντά. Έτσι, ώστε να αντιναχθείς κι εσύ. Στα άρθρα σου συχνά έκανες θεωρητικές αναλύσεις της αυτοπυρπόλησης..."(177).

Aris, shocked at the man's boldness, and at his ability to know him so well, thinks of how the coincidences of the past had enclosed him in an inescapable dependence, and in a desperate attempt to escape the effects of that humiliating subjection he threatens to leave for Athens on the next flight, to which the man calmly replies that he will be waiting for him to return to the same bar, at the same time the following day. Aris not only returns, but activates the bomb in the exact way that the journalist had planned, causing both the death of many people and the symbolic death of his freedom. However, since the narrative of the novel *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* is written from the point of view of Aris, it is bound to the uncertainties that torment him all his life. Thus, as Aris is never sure if he really activated the bomb or not, the reader is not given any clues in order to assess if Aris really caused the death of those innocent bystanders in Geneva. The bomb episode functions more clearly on a metaphorical level to signify the triggering of the symbolic death of Aris' illusory belief in his sovereign subjectivity, by exposing the vast extent to which he is unwittingly subjected to the commands of someone else's plans. Concurrently, the same episode becomes the pivot around which the events of Aris'

second journey to Geneva revolve. Moreover, as has been mentioned, all the relationships that Aris has in the narrative, result either in literal death or in permanent separation, a metaphorical death. Although Aris seems to feel comfortable with the separations, usually dismissing their implications by a variation of the remark he made in the case of Martin "κάποια στιγμή τον ξέχασα ή, καλύτερα, τον έβγαλα από την πραγματικότητά μου[...]και καταλήξαμε να μην υπάρχουμε ο ένας για τον άλλο"(103), as far as deaths are concerned he remains uncertain about what really happened, so that the reality concerning all physical deaths recorded in Aris' autobiographical narrative can never be accounted for in its totality.

5. 9. Death and The Fatal Distraction

The notion of death takes over the rest of the narrative, as Aris' web of personal uncertainty is inextricably, literally and metaphorically, woven by and expressed in the events concerning Eva's and Boris' deaths, in both of which Pavlos is involved.

Eva's death "ποτέ δεν έγινε οριστικός, απτός, όπως ταιριάζει σ' ένα θάνατο"(111) because the circumstances surrounding it are never really spelt out in the narrative, and they are never clearly formed in Aris' mind either. It occurs when she goes on a trip with Aris and Pavlos; a trip they have decided to begin by going

to Piraeus and getting on the first boat available without asking for its destination.⁶

Aris enjoys the journey until the sea gets rough and he goes inside to get some sleep, leaving Eva holding on tightly to the ship's rail in defiance of the elements. When he opens his eyes the ship has reached its destination, and Aris disembarks as Pavlos goes to look for Eva. He waits in vain to see Eva and Pavlos leaving the ship, until suddenly he sees Pavlos still aboard, impatiently calling him, to tell him in apparent distress that they cannot find Eva anywhere: "Χάθηκε μου είπε απότομα. Δεν τη βρίσκουμε πουθενά"(114). When Eva disappears, both Aris and Pavlos are thrown into speculations about conflicting versions of her death as an accident, suicide or even murder; at the same time they focus their efforts on putting an end to the police suspicions about the possibility of their involvement. When Pavlos' penal record becomes known and the certainty that he pushed her overboard emerges, Aris gives false testimony, to reassure the police that Pavlos has an alibi.

That simple act of lying devastates Aris, because "τη στιγμή που με την ψεύτικη μαρτυρία μου ελευθέρωνα τον Παύλο, δε φανταζόμουν πως μια ευκαιριακή συνενοχή κινητοποιεί τόσες σκοτεινές

⁶ The defining features of this trip (the uncertain destination, the open options, uncertain death, etc) make it a blueprint for Aris' second journey to Geneva which underlines the narrative, and which began with an absence of definite plans and unnamed destinations and ended in Aris' symbolically uncertain death.

λειτουργίες!"(116). At the same time, Aris' lie has a significant effect on Pavlos as well, who puts an end to their silently treating Eva's absence as temporary; he argues that he would have been able to believe that Eva's death was an accident, "γιατί η αυτοκτονία προϋποθέτει κάποια μορφή απελπισίας που η Εύα δεν είχε"(120), if it were not for the fact that Aris had intervened with a deliberately fabricated statement to save him from suspicion, thus suggesting that murder was an equally valid possibility. What Pavlos really wants to know is whether Aris suspects him of murdering Eva, and when Aris refuses to answer directly, presenting instead the possibility that he himself could have been the murderer, the search for the reality of what happened to Eva gives way to the unanswerable search for the motives behind such a deadly act, as the two men question each other:

Το βλέμμα του σκοτείνιασε.

—Μα εσύ δεν είχες λόγους...

Χαμογέλασα και ρώτησα ήσυχα:

—Είχες μήπως εσύ; (121).

After a considerable amount of time elapses, Pavlos and Aris resume their meetings, and the discussions concentrate on matters other than Eva's death. As soon as the official notification announces that the police have called off the search for Eva, Aris is thrown into distress, thinking of Mario, "που με δίδασκε πως όποτε ο κοινός νους βεβαιώνεται, εγώ πρέπει να αμφιβάλλω, όποτε ο κοινός νους δεν χρειάζεται αποδείξεις, εγώ πρέπει να τις ζητώ. Ίσως αιτία υπήρξε η μακρινή του επίδραση, αλλά μόλις το θέμα έκλεισε για όλους, άνοιξε αυτόματα για μένα"(127). Looking for clues and

considering the rather improbable possibilities that Eva might have been carried off to a desert island or a foreign land by a raft or a dolphin, he reaches a logical impasse, for all versions of Eva's death had to be based on an absence of a body which would provide him with concrete evidence, and thus convince his senses. As no one has witnessed her fall into the sea, and as no one can come up with the corpse as final proof of her death, Aris comes to the realization that for all he knows, Eva may be alive, and his attention shifts from the mystery of her death to the mystery of her continuing existence. Precisely at that moment, and because as Aris remarks "η επιθυμία και η πραγματικότητα ποτέ δεν έχουν αντίστοιχους ρυθμούς στην κίνηση"(128), a corpse is found in the sea in a state of advanced decomposition, and the two friends are called in to identify it.

The remains available for identification, the pieces of flesh and bone, do not represent for Aris anything related to Eva, whose body he envisages in an endlessly peaceful drifting under water. His rejoicing in the impossibility of confining Eva in a definite identification is interrupted by Pavlos' intervention who says that he can positively identify a chain found hanging from the corpse's neck-bones, as the one he had owned since childhood and once given to Eva as a present.

As soon as the coffin containing Eva's remains is buried, Aris starts interrogating Pavlos about the truth of his deposition to the police in a dialogue exchanged in a very similar way to the one they had on their way back from the fatal island:

—Ήταν η αλυσίδα που έφερες από τη Ρωσία; [...]

—Ισως.[...]

—Αν δεν ήταν δική σου η αλυσίδα, τότε βιάστηκες να κλείσει η ιστορία. Γιατί;[...]

—Σ το χρωστούσα. Κάποτε με βοήθησες κι εσύ...

Τι εννοούσε; Ποιά βοήθεια νόμιζε πως μου πρόσφερε;

Δεν μου άφησε περιθώριο για καινούργιες ερωτήσεις. Αλλά πριν χαθεί πίσω από ένα κτίριο, γύρισε και μου φώναξε:

—Μη φοβάσαι. Η αλυσίδα ήταν δική μου! (131)

Aris has to satisfy his visual sense in order to believe that Eva is really dead, and because of the absence of a corpse that really and undoubtedly belongs to Eva, she may still be alive, travelling inconspicuously to unknown parts of the world as she has always done in the past. In the same way, the narrative forces the reader into a position of uncertainty similar to Aris', since no concrete information is given that would help resolve the question of the real identity of the corpse.

The chain found on the corpse's (Eva's?) neck, instead of providing Aris and the reader with tangible evidence to prove that Eva was dead, acquires a metaphorical significance in the narrative, as a strategic invention that further enhances uncertainty. It represents a chain of events that inexorably connect the past to the future, in a version of narrative reality of which Aris and the reader are made part, but which remains outside one's knowledge or control. It becomes a chain of uncertainty that forbids one to discern the limits between reality and fantasy while at the same time it is firmly attached to death, be it physical, imaginary, or metaphorical.

The blurring of the boundaries between reality and fantasy, inscribed in the fictional discourse of *To Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, is carried even further in the narration by Aris' excursion with Pavlos and Boris to the house by the sea. As death and journeys seem to go hand in hand in this novel, it is in the course of this short trip that the reader is thrown into permanent distraction, as the narrative proclaims its fictionality by making Aris discover that even when he witnesses someone's death, and despite the reassurance of the presence of a corpse, his senses (or the reader's for that matter) can never be trusted to attest to the reality of even the most final and irreversible state of ceasing to exist.

On the level of the story's recent past, Pavlos invites Aris to spend three weeks in his house by the sea, saying that "θέλω να αποχαιρετιστούμε παρατεταμένα"(80) before Aris embarks on his long and potentially infinite journey. Aris reluctantly agrees⁷ to take part in this 'suicide expedition' despite the fact that Pavlos does nothing to counter his major objection, which focuses on the fact that the dying Boris is going with them. He merely insists that what Aris calls a death-rattle is nothing but Boris' heavy breathing.

⁷ It took Pavlos more than three months to persuade Aris, since Aris had come back to Athens on the 28th of May and a week later when he told Pavlos of his decision to go abroad again soon, Pavlos offered an excursion to the house by the sea as a farewell present, starting on the 10th of September for three weeks.

As the excursion revolves around the two men's radically opposed interpretations of the sound coming out of the otherwise completely speechless Boris, it becomes a fictional battleground that blurs the distinction between imaginary and empirical perception, reality and fantasy, ideas and tangible objects, and finally between life and death in language games.

The first day of the excursion begins with Aris obsessed by Boris' morbid presence as he lies in the back of the car, mouth open gasping for air, his death being apparently imminent. Pavlos' dismissal of Aris' obsessive imagination, "δεν σε κουράζουν οι φαντασιώσεις;"(160), triggers off in Aris' mind the memory of how Boris' physical presence, even in absence, had upset him immensely in the past, inexorably violating him wherever he was. Despite the fact that the sound of Boris' breathing cannot always be heard, it becomes for Aris a metonymy for Boris' death-rattle: "ο ρόγχος, που δεν άκουγα, περνούσε μέσα μου σαν τόξο με δηλητήριο, από τα αυτιά μου έτρεχε αίμα"(162). As the distinction between reality and fantasy becomes unclear, in an attempt to escape at least the physical dimension of the sight of the dying Boris, Aris buys a pair of cheap dark glasses, only to find to his dismay that their distorting lenses "Από την πραγματικότητα με προστάτευαν. Όχι όμως απ' τη φαντασία"(162). Aris' fantasising about the effect of the dying Boris becomes more threatening than his actual presence, with the result that, when they finally reach the house by the sea Aris helps Pavlos carry Boris from the car

to the house, provoking Pavlos' cynical remark that "τελικά σ' ενοχλούν οι ιδέες, όχι τα πράγματα"(165).

Aris' decision to touch Boris physically is the result of his realisation that he has not really observed anyone in the process of dying before Boris, and his conviction about the imminence of his death is shaken. Among the real deaths Aris has briefly witnessed are those of an Austrian who threw himself under a train in Vienna, a Norwegian girl who slit her wrists in a hostel in Amsterdam, "υπήρχε φυσικά και η Γενεύη. Οι πλατείες, η λίμνη, τα υπόστεγα, το πλήθος..."(163), and Philippos who had died the previous year in hospital. Then there are those other deaths that he has not seen and thus considers more fierce, such as Mario's, Eva's, and the restaurant owner's. There are also those deaths, most bitter of all, which, because their circumstances were totally unknown to him, he has been forced to imagine: Christina, whom he fantasised as being stabbed to death in the French metro, or Martin, whom he visualised as jumping from the top floor holding his identity card tightly. Last but not least, he imagined Jill's possible death in a riding or skiing accident. As far as what he calls the 'real' deaths -that is, the ones "που έζησα από κοντά"(162)- are concerned, their circumstances are as uncertain as the alleged Geneva deaths which were supposedly caused by the bomb he was never sure he activated. By the exclusion of the witnessed deaths, he is left only with the ones he has heard about or imagined. Thus, when Pavlos repeats his question as to whether this will be the first time Aris has seen someone die, he replies: "-Ναι, απάντησα. Ναι, πρώτη"(164).

The distinction between events and ideas, between the real and the imagined, becomes Aris' major preoccupation during the excursion. As death is directly linked to writing, it becomes related to his inability in the past to distinguish between what his senses were telling him and what the scenario of the journalist had had in store for him. Agitated by the very real sound of Pavlos' typewriter, he starts considering the possibility that what he perceives as the permeating murmur of Boris' death-rattle, haunting him wherever he goes, is in reality nothing more than a product of his own imagination. In order to escape, Aris spends whole days on the rocks near the sea, until upon returning to the house, he sits on the terrace listening to the sound of Pavlos' typing, a sound that he considers offensive because whereas "ο ρόγχος υπήρχε ανεξέλεγκτα, αν τελικά υπήρχε...ο θόρυβος της γραφομηχανής γινόταν επίτηδες για να με προκαλεί (166), constantly reminding him of his failure to break the codes of Pavlos' literature in the same way he had failed to see through the journalist's hidden motives.

Just as in the Geneva bar, when he presented the journalist with the texts he had written, he felt the imminence of a devastating revelation, Aris suffocates in a fresh bout of uncertainty which oscillates between extreme rationalisation and extreme paranoia, to the point that he cannot breathe freely even in the privacy of his room, tormented by "μιά ακαθόριστη απειλή...οι νύχτες με βάραιναν, μα περισσότερο οι κρυφές μου σκέψεις"(167). Having had the bitter experience of the journalist's

deceitfulness, which later proved him right in having wondered "Μήπως συμβαίνει κάτι άλλο; Μήπως κρύβεται και με κρύβει για λόγους που δεν μου ομολογεί;"(153), Aris' suspicion that Pavlos would not have dragged him all this way, endangering the life of a man who is mortally ill, just to bid farewell without having another deeper secret reason, becomes a certainty.

Ridiculed by his past inability to distinguish what was real and what he had imagined, Aris becomes determined to keep a close watch over the present situation, in an effort to anticipate the script of the future in the midst of suspicions that continuously "άλλαζαν το μέλλον σε σχήματα υποθετικά"(168). Aris begins to stand outside the door of Boris' room to find out if he is still alive. Upon listening to the death-rattle which "βρισκόταν πάντα εκεί. Βαρύς, αγωνιώδης, αλλά και αγωνιστικός...όλα πάνε καλά...η ζωή αντιστέκεται...η ζωή επιμένει"(168), he returns to his room thinking that he is still safe, as the most threatening and disturbing sound has by now, in the midst of a rising paranoia, become a sign of optimism and a symbol of his newly established obsession to remain fully alert in terms of what is really happening.

This peace of mind is soon shattered, as the death-rattle steadily quietens, and a new anxiety creeps in in the form of an uncertainty about the testimony of his own senses: "πάλι, μήπως τη φανταζόμουν την εξασθένηση; Μήπως η επανάληψη των νυχτερινών επισκέψεων μου είχε αμβλύνει τις αισθήσεις;"(183), reminding the reader of Philippos' argument, previously scorned by Aris, that

"το μόνο συστατικό της συνήθειας είναι η επανάληψη"(77). Trying to escape Pavlos' secret scenario which would expose him as a pawn in a compromising position of dependency, Aris concentrates his investigations on discovering Pavlos' secret. One night, while checking on Boris' breathing, and upon noticing all the closed doors in the house, the idea strikes him that "σε κάποιο από αυτά τα δωμάτια κρύβεται η Εύα"(184).

He asks Pavlos to show him around the house in an effort to discover clues that will enable him to detect what is in store for him in the future. He is, however, unable to provide himself with a concrete and rational explanation for his suspicions of the paradoxical game in which, with Pavlos' assistance, Eva has remained in hiding for four years, only to surprise Aris by suddenly appearing behind a closed door.

After meticulously searching all the rooms in the house, and as he is ready to make the rational admission that the only games in which he is implicated are those that his own imagination has created, his paranoia takes over again. He perceives of a different version of hitherto hidden reality, that Eva is hiding in the darkness of Boris' room, and, considering this impulse to be finally true, "απροσδόκητα η αλήθεια είχε λάμψει"(188), he rushes into the room before Pavlos can object.

Upon seeing Boris lying on the bed, his mouth wide open and gasping for air, Aris engages Pavlos in the same arguments about the state of Boris' health and the level of the sound of his

breathing, as inconclusively as he had done at the beginning of the journey.

When Pavlos unexpectedly admits that the 'real' reason behind inviting Aris on the excursion was to ask him a question when the time was right, Aris is thrown once again into a state of perpetual expectation and uncertainty.

Reassuring himself that the option of leaving and ridding himself of the unpleasant submission to someone else's secret plans is still open, Aris chooses to stay, thinking that since all his life had been subjected to other people's games it is too late and futile to revolt now, the full reality always being beyond his field of vision: "θα είχε όμως νόημα να επαναστατήσω; Μια ζωή έπαιζα σε παιχνίδια ξένα[...]θα ήταν λοιπόν ανούσιο να εξεγερθώ. Θα έπαιζα και σ' αυτό το ξένο παιχνίδι. Με την ελπίδα πως θα ήταν το τελευταίο μου"(192).

In the midst of the confusion between a reality that he cannot control and his fantasies about it, Aris passively awaits for Pavlos' mysterious question until the penultimate day of the excursion, when he regains confidence, thinking that "η απαλλαγή μου από την απειλή ενός θανάτου, η απαλλαγή μου από την αγριότητα της φαντασίας ή της φαντασίωσης, η απαλλαγή μου από ένα ξένο παιχνίδι"(202) is very near.

In a repetition of Aris' feelings provoked at the time a corpse was unexpectedly discovered at the moment he had become sure that Eva was alive, an event that had made him

remark that "η επιθυμία και η πραγματικότητα ποτέ δεν έχουν αντίστοιχους ρυθμούς στην κίνηση"(128), he soon comes to realise that once more things are not what they seem to be.

The process of destruction of all that Aris believes to be real, true and tangible, suggestively begins during the last supper, in a dialogue between Pavlos and Aris that gives the impression that some answers will finally be given. In the familiar style of previous dialogues between the two men, this merely reaffirms Aris' uncertainty.

Pavlos not only asks if Aris murdered Eva, but also accuses him of limited abilities for rational thought, "σκέφτεσαι μόνο μέσα από ενδεχόμενα"(206), attributing this impairment to the devastating effects the activation of the bomb in Geneva must have had on Aris.

Adding to Aris' surprise, Pavlos reveals that it is he who had informed Pavlos about the Geneva events in order to convince him that his literary endeavours are shameful. Aris finds himself in that state of uncertainty he has done everything possible to avoid: "ήμουν εγώ αυτός; Εγώ είχα κάνει οποιασδήποτε μορφής κήρυγμα; Μου αφαιρούσε κάθε είδος αυτογνωσίας λοιπόν;"(208). Unable to detect how Pavlos has come into contact with thoughts that Aris has never communicated, he feels he is reliving a repetition of that dialogue with the journalist concerning the same issue. The discursive position that "η σωστή εξέγερση γίνεται με κίνδυνο και αίμα"(208) because "ο σύγχρονος λόγος για την πολιτική δεν μπορεί να είναι λόγος, αλλά μια σειρά από βόμβες σε σημεία καίρια"(175) was the

one occupied by Aris' fictional 'I' while he wrote the articles for the journalist. Through the revelation that Aris has addressed Pavlos, assuming the persona constructed by the journalist, the answer to his question "ήμουν εγώ αυτός;" suggests his 'I' as an elusive effect of textuality.⁸

The narrative appropriately stages this discussion at Boris' bedside. At the moment the discussion ends, Aris turns on the light to look at Pavlos' face, but his gaze involuntarily falls on Boris and he realises that the death rattle has stopped and Boris is dead. Pavlos repeatedly dismisses Aris' announcement that Boris has died as another of his fantasies, and Aris admits final defeat, feeling that he has been forced to return to the same position assigned to him the first time he saw Pavlos and Boris together: "παρείσακτος. Ο παραλογισμός με είχε αποκλείσει"(212).

Realizing that he can never be free from the subjection to the unbreakable codes of their private language and Pavlos' personal literature, he leaves the house and with Pavlos' comment still echoing in his ears, "με κούρασες με τις φαντασιώσεις σου!"(213), he embarks on his second journey to Geneva, during which he produces the autobiographical narrative that makes up

⁸Aris has on a previous occasion wondered about his 'I' having been affected unconsciously and unwittingly through a dependence on another person. This case is reported in relation to Aris' refusal to allow Elsa to influence his 'I', while at the same time he tries to understand how he had already surrendered it to Jill: "λίγα χρόνια πριν, πώς μπόρεσα:[...] εγώ ήμουν, μόνο εγώ, δεν έχω αμφιβολίες" (37).

the *To Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*. His "notes" become an attempt to inscribe the death of the textual dimension of the past and present of his constructed subjectivity, hoping that after the completion of the story he will enter a new form of existence, both one marked by the silence of a life outside the text -of which he is the main subject and one to which he is subjected- in the realm of death that gives the future its colour. As Aris has never been in a position to testify to the reality of anyone's death, his desire for his own death turns out to be another of his "φαντασιώσεις", since his subjectivity remains a product of the textuality that recreates his uncertainties every time a reader opens the novel *To Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*.

5. 10. The End of a Journey and a Text

Acting out the final part of the script of his past, and sitting in the same Geneva bar in which he had met the journalist five months earlier, Aris writes the concluding "notes" that make up the last part of the narrative. Completing his "notes" will signify the beginning of a future as he desires it to be. This future desire, however, has by now been strongly affected by Philippos' argument that "δεν έχουν νόημα τα σχήματα του μέλλοντος, αφού θα γίνονται με στατικούς υπολογισμούς του παρελθόντος"(186). Aris, in revisiting his past life through his notes, has gone through the phase of believing that "Υπήρχε λόγος; Πάλι και πότε υπάρχει λόγος για οτιδήποτε! Τα πράγματα απλώς συμβαίνουν, ύστερα αμφίβολοι συλλογισμοί προσπαθούν να διακρίνουν αίτια, αιτιατά και καταστάσεις"(187), and later to the phase of believing that "τα

γεγονότα συμβαίνουν επειδή είχαν ένα κρυφό προκαθορισμό κι ύστερα βιασμένοι λογικοί συσχετισμοί προσπαθούν να διακρίνουν παράγοντες και συγκυρίες" (204). At this final stage of his quest, his journey and his text he proclaims that he is aware of the impossibility of a final end through his notes:

Διαισθάνομαι πως οι σημειώσεις μου πρέπει να τελειώσουν εδώ. Οχι, δεν πλησιάζει η ολοκλήρωση, άλλωστε τίποτα δεν ολοκληρώνεται ποτέ, όλα απλώς κάποτε σταματούν κι ύστερα βιασμένοι λογικοί συσχετισμοί προσπαθούν να διακρίνουν αρχή, μέση και τέλος.(179)

In this sense, even death cannot provide him with a stable and final reference point, since after having experienced the uncertainty that Eva's and Boris' death had generated, and even after concluding that the only 'real' death he had known was Philippos' own, he decides that, by putting that incident into his "notes" and by making it part of his fiction, he has cancelled out the objective reality of its finality: "(ως δεν έβλεπα τη νεκρική ακινησία του Φίλιππου σαν αντικειμενικό γεγονός. Ίσως προσηλώνομουν στους μετασχηματισμούς της ύλης[...] που θα λίπαινε το χρώμα του μέλλοντος[...] και, εκστατικός, να αντίκριζα παντού προεκτάσεις της ζωής του."(180)

Aris appears to be aware that death by writing cannot put an end to his dependence on language. In the same way that Aris, as a reader of his own life, reproduces it in his notes, the readers of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* will try to discern patterns and arrange the events of his narration in a strict temporal order, through

their own "βιασμένοι λογικοί συσχετισμοί", endlessly interpreting him and thus perpetuating his life in fiction.

The only way out for Aris must come through silence. Aware of the contradictions in his thought, reproduced in the discourse of his "notes" and presenting a fraudulent version of his self, he determines to put an end to this deceptive language-game by falling silent, "θα σωπάσω", so as to move on to his next destination of non-existence. The countdown to silence begins - "ό,τι προλάβω να σημειώσω μέχρι τότε"(180)- until the end which is marked by the bar's closing which will mark the time the end of his "notes" is reached.

Future-tense narration is temporarily and for the first time used at the time when, in a last attempt to control reality through his fiction, Aris imagines an immediate imaginary future, in which the blonde woman sitting opposite him would turn out to be the long-lost Jill. As he would be observing the turquoise, unable to free himself from its magnetism, he would wish for the door to open and Martin, Christina, Eva, Mario, Pavlos "και, γιατί όχι, και ο Μπόρις αν χρειαζόταν"(181) would come in the room to offer advice in accordance with their respective discourses presented in Aris' notes.

In this fantasy, Eva would tell Aris not to worry, because love is temporary, and "πλούσιες είναι οι ζωές που δεν σταματούν πουθενά" like her own. Mario would show him the latest type of hand-grenade. Christina would ask him why he never did any sculpting instead of falling in love with Jill, since "οι έρωτες

οξύνουν τις αισθήσεις μονοδιάστατα".(181) Martin would give him his torn identity card as a gift. Pavlos would try to indulge him in discussions of literary theories. Boris would stop his death rattle just to please him and Philippos would phlegmatically insist that "το θέαμα του θανάτου μου σε πλήγωσε περισσότερο. Παραδέξου το!"(182).

Aris is unable to sustain a fantasy about the future without the past's violating intervention in his thoughts: "το βλέμμα του παρόντος δεν βιάζει μόνο το μέλλον, βιάζει και το παρελθόν και το πραγματικό πάντα γλυστρά στις αχανείς εκτάσεις του απρόσιτου"(195), since in this fantasy, through the forceful involvement of his friends, Jill's turquoise lost its power and has become "ένα απλό τυρκουάζ, όπως χιλιάδες άλλα..."(182). The magic of the colour of Jill's eyes is not 'real'. It is only a product of the linguistic games of Aris' text, and as such it is deprived of its powerful effects upon entering other linguistic games that refuse to verify its primacy.

The colour of Jill's eyes is used in the narrative to further subvert the inadequacy of the conventional representation of reality in fiction as Aris wakes up from his fantasy and acknowledges yet another version of reality about Jill. The new 'real' and final version of Jill comes from a photograph. Interestingly, the narrative's position on the existence of a graspable (photographable) reality, an "αβίαστη γλώσσα των πραγμάτων"(33) and the possibility of representing that reality through texts, visual or otherwise, has been made clear quite

early in the novel, in an incident involving a discussion between Aris and Martin about the fraudulence of photographs and the validity of visual impressions: Aris had argued that "η όραση παραπλανά[...]περιορίζει[...]γι' αυτό ποτέ δεν συμπάθησα τις φωτογραφίες, θεωρούσα πως βάζαν το πραγματικό, πως συνειδητά εξαπατούσαν"(33) whereas Martin had proclaimed that "κάθε φωτογράφιση είναι μία εκδοχή, άρα η γοητεία του υποκειμενισμού διατηρείται"(33). The reality of the testimony of the photograph of Jill that Aris looked at before tearing it to pieces remains inconclusive, because the narrative leaves open the possibility that it might have been black and white; the photograph, seen through Aris' eyes, presented Jill as having not blond but brown hair, and her eyes not turquoise but "ήταν μαύρα, το μαύρο του κάρβουνου"(198). Irrespective of the photograph being in colour or in black and white, Aris is exposed as doubly deceived, since the only colour that is firmly inscribed in the narrative is black, the colour of permanent separation and death. This, then, becomes the colour of the future that the title of Neni Efthymiadi's novel announces.

Jill's eyes were turquoise only in regard to her status as Aris' creation subjected to his control. Since Aris is in turn subjected to the discourse of *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* which reveals Jill's eyes to be black, reality is exposed as a construct; it is a product of infinite linguistic games, in which the individual's subjectivity, through which that reality is perceived, is nothing but a fictional discursive position.

The journalist had reminded Aris of the inevitability and inescapability of the individual's involvement in language games beyond one's control, "δεν υπάρχει δικό σου παιχνίδι. Δεν μπορεί να υπάρξει! Το έγραφε στα άρθρα, τώρα το ξεχνάς;"(198) and Aris comes to realise that the liberating effect that he desired his "notes" to have is utopian. Thus, he decides to recreate the factual sequence of his movements as defined in the past by the journalist's terrorist scenario. This time, however, the destructive and deadly material will be provided by the text of the linguistic games played in his notes, in a final effort to break loose from his constructed 'I' and to achieve "την αποκοπή από τα όσα με κατασκεύασαν, χρησιμοποιώντας την αφελή συνενοχή μου. Εμένα που δεν με γνώρισα ποτέ! (215).

In the journalist's plot, the plan for activating the bomb provided the option for Aris to bring about his physical death "αν προτιμάς την αυτοκαταστροφή"(196). Five months earlier Aris had chosen not to take that option, but followed the rest of the plan to the last detail: πήρα το μικρό πακέτο, το πακέτο του ξένου παιχνιδιού, και, χωρίς μια λέξη έφυγα... βρήκα το δρόμο και σε λίγο βρισκόμουν εκεί, στη λίμνη. Στη λίμνη με τα χαρούμενα καράβια και τον υπνωτισμένο τουρισμό. Παρατήρησα την υγρή κίνηση, τις άτακτες λάμπεις από τα φώτα της όχθης. Σήκωσα το μικρό πακέτο και σημάδεψα μακριά, πολύ μακριά"(199). At present, however, he decides to opt for self-destruction, determined to recreate the explosive situation in this, his second trip, with his "notes" symbolically in the place of the remote control pointed at his past: "θα τυλίξω σε ρολό τα

χαρτιά που συμπλήρωνα σε όλο το ταξίδι μου, θα τα δέσω με σπάγγο και θα ακολουθήσω τα βήματα του τότε. Θα σταθώ στο ίδιο σημείο ακριβώς. Θα παρατηρήσω τη σκοτεινή κίνηση της λίμνης, τις υγρές λάμπεις από τα φώτα της όχθης. Θα υψώσω το πακέτο με τις σημειώσεις μου και θα σημαδέψω μακριά, πολύ μακριά..."(199).

As Aris' story is only hours away from its end and as the narrative is only a few pages away from completion, Aris turns his thoughts away from the future and towards the suspicions that have overwhelmed him in terms of the cancelling potential of writing about the past:

Ξεκίνησα ένα ταξίδι για το μέλλον, για το μηδέν που υπόσχεται ελευθερίες, όμως το παρελθόν διεκδικεί τη σκέψη μου. Ένα παρελθόν φορτισμένο με εύθραυστες βεβαιότητες, με ακαθόριστες φιγούρες, με υποψίες νοθεύσεων, παρελθόν πλατύ κι απέραντο που ακρωτηριάζω με τα μικρά μου βλέμματα ή φυλακίζω σε λαθεμένα σχήματα πρόσκαιρων εμμονών, μια ατελείωτη διαδικασία πλάνης...(93).

Realising the fraudulence of linguistic representations, he becomes certain that his life story, in the concentrated form of the narrative titled *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, despite his desire to disconnect his subjectivity from the commands of textuality, will go on existing to become yet another reminder of the past "που, και μέσα απ' την απόρριψη, αιώνια θα μου βιάζει το μέλλον!"(217), perpetually defining Aris' relationship to it as that of a fictional literary analogue.

Determined, too, to pursue the recreation of the events prior to the activation of the bomb, and by now aware that the limits

between υποψία and βεβαιότητα are blurred, their reality always elusive, Aris finally understands that only versions of reality are possible. Moreover, these versions depend only on temporary and fleeting interpretations. He proceeds, thus, to narrate the incidents before the bomb throwing, in an attempt to register the memory of the event and interpret it simultaneously for the first time.

He thinks (νομίζω) that he was not alone because on that exceptionally hot day, he walked towards the designated square along with his friends *in absentia* in terms of the reality of his impression of the incident, and the discursive positions that they represented very much *in praesentia*. These positions, described through Aris' earlier narration, are shown to negate the validity of Aris' previous inscriptions of them since now they are presented through a major shift of focus.

Mario gives him a friendly embrace and tells him to be careful to keep some distance from the target point "δεν πρέπει να αυτοπυρποληθείς, το έχω ήδη κάνει εγώ. Αλλωστε χρειάζομαι κάποιον να με θυμάται που και που, μετά το τέλος μου κατάλαβα πως θα προτιμούσα την αιωνιότητα"(219).

Eva and Pavlos follow, embracing and talking to each other about Aris. Pavlos tells her that "μόνο ο Μπόρις θα τον κατανοούσε" and Eva replies that "μου μοιάζει αρκετά, μετά την βόμβα κάτι άλλο θα τον παρασύρει"(219)

As soon as Jill approaches him, Aris sends her abruptly away, "όπως διώχνει κανείς το παρελθόν του"(220), and asks Philippos to come close and help him; Philippos shouts that he cannot support "μάταιες ενέργειες. Προτιμώ την ματαιότητα της σκέψης. Εκείνης που φαντάστηκες πως δεν συνειδητοποίησα..."(220) and distances himself indignantly at the moment when the procession (of Aris and the absentees) is approaching the fatal square.

When Mario reminds Aris that in three minutes he must press the button, Aris suddenly sees a very old Christina who only speaks to Mario to accuse him of destroying Aris' chances "να πειραματίζεται ειρηνικά"(221). Mario, who does not even bother to reply, makes Christina look even older for being so blatantly ignored, and reminds Aris that in a minute he has to press the button, encouraging him by saying "μη διστάσεις! Δεν είσαι όργανο, είσαι νευραλγικό σημείο! Και μην ακούς τους στοχαστές. Η τόλμη κινεί τα πάντα!"(221).

Aris remembers that a few seconds before the vital moment all his friends disappeared, leaving him alone and sure only that "πάντως είχα κάνει μιά κίνηση. Μικρή, πολύ μικρή"(221) because everything after the last small movement happened very fast. He did not see anything as he had instinctively jumped into the lake and swam in its alternating bright colours until "αν και ο ήλιος στεκόταν έκθαμβος και έκθαμβωτικός στη μέση του σύμπαντος, όλα έγιναν μαύρα"(222). When he got out of the water, he turned to an old lady who was passing by and anxiously asked for her interpretation of what had happened. She simply replied "Τίποτα δεν έγινε. Απλώς

είσαστε βρεμένος"(222), thus emphasizing his already expanding uncertainty once again.

Having inconclusively ended his narration concerning the bomb, Aris is almost at the end of the narration about his fragmentary memories in his "χειρόγραφα των αναπόφευκτων αποφάσεων"(222). As a metaphor for his present situation, he returns the narration to the past, to the time immediately preceeding Jill's permanent departure, the end of his relationship with her, and on the metafictional level, Jill's textual death through her entry into the silence that follows the end of the text.

As soon as Aris realised that Jill's permanent departure was imminent, he was determined that when the time came for her to leave, he would try to concentrate on capturing the precise moment her permanent absence would begin: "η στιγμή, η ασήμαντη στιγμή, εκείνη που ενώνει μέλλον και παρελθόν σαν μονάδα αόριστη, άπιαστη, είχε αποκτήσει ιδιαίτερη σημασία"(224). Being at the end of a text that will mark the beginning of his life outside it, he revolts against the inescapability of language and its inadequate descriptions of reality. This inescapability is reinforced by the fact that just as Boris' presence had made him feel "παρείσακτος[...] με είχε αποκλείσει"(212), the recollection of Jill's imminently permanent absence not only arouses similar feelings but is also described through the same words: "παρείσακτος στη φυγή της Τζίλλ, παρείσακτος όπως και στη ζωή μου όλη, αριθμούσα τις μονάδες της αγωνίας μου και μυστικά ευχόμουν το τέλος. Το τέλος που θα με νέκρωνε,

μα που θα ήταν και η αρχή μου"(225). However, since all games, language or otherwise, demand that they be perceived as 'real', just before their parting was to be finalised, Aris and Jill resorted to making elaborate plans for a common future, with dates and places and distances calculated to the last detail.

Promising each other to write every day, their future life together was connected to the present through texts, consciously perpetuating "το κοινό μας ψέμα, το ψέμα της αιωνιότητας, ίσως και της αθανασίας"(226). This is the same lie that he had accused Pavlos of living in his relationship with Boris both literally and metaphorically. Aris accompanied Jill to the airport and when her boarding announcement came, escorted her to the glass door that literally barred him and, on a metaphorical level, suggestively separated the temporariness of reality from the permanence of fantasy⁹. Thus, before Jill disappeared, they exchanged a hurried kiss, and Aris smiled consentingly, acknowledging the permanence of their separation despite the fictional continuation of their story which suggested that they would soon meet again in Berlin.

Having narrated the last memory of his past life that he can recall, Aris reaches the end of his text and therefore comes

⁹ The notion of observing behind glass someone whom Aris cannot control has also been used in the case of Boris to give a false sense of security. Aris describes that between them "Υπήρχε ένα διάφανο γυαλί, ένα γυαλί που απ' τη μεριά του Μπόρις ήταν σκούρο, εγώ όμως, ανεινόχλητος, μπορούσα να τον παρακολουθώ"(18).

close to the end of his quest for the past, whose reality has escaped him, and whose reality he hoped to recapture permanently in the closure of his text, hoping to achieve "την αργή συμφιλίωσή μου με νόμους κοσμικούς, τη συμφιλίωση που θα ήταν η αρχή του τέλους μου, του τέλους που πιά θα επιθυμούσα"(62). He finally understands that since the reality of the past will always escape him, the process of liberation that he undertook was a process of self-deception. Through his journey and his text, Aris has acknowledged the fraudulent representation of reality in fiction, as well as his dependence on language codes, whose "εξαρτήσεις γενικά λειτουργούν και αθέατα"(110). Since his "notes" depended solely on his largely inadequate memory for their development, the 'I' he never knew becomes the effect of the linguistic inscription of those memories. In the language game of his notes, "το παιχνίδι με τις λευκές σελίδες"(81), which began in order to cancel out the subjectivity assigned to him by the dominant discourses of the main people in his life, Aris played to win by following the strategy of "Ξεχνώντας, καταργώντας διαγράφοντας!" (192), a strategy that would enable him to recreate his self from nothing.

This strategy, however, only produced a powerful but inconclusive interpretive discourse, from which something crucial, in this case Aris' real 'I', will always remain unknown and, by implication, impossible. As his subjectivity will always depend on the textual inscriptions of how his memories were constructed, and since he himself has admitted that "όταν μ' εγκαταλείπει η μνήμη, εγώ γίνομαι ένα τίποτα[...]καί η ζωή ολόκληρη ένα

ερωτηματικό που σαρκάζει"(170), the text suggests that his 'I' cannot lie outside all that his 'eye' had seen and his hand written: outside language, outside the bounds of Logos.

Considering the possibility of satisfying his desire to know his real self, Aris is forced to wonder whether "θα πάψω άραγε να σκέφτομαι στη γλώσσα που μιλώ, θα καταργήσω ποτέ τη σκέψη; Τη σκέψη ετούτη, τη δοτή, τη γαλήνια φυλακή μου;"(217). Since the only possible desire that escapes Logos is death, Aris sets out to achieve a textual death, which gives the future its black colour and signifies the moment that his 'I' begins living in silence, not after one thousand and one nights, but only after two hundred and twenty six pages.

According to Lacanian theory, desire is a product of language and as such it is subject to the constant deferral of satisfaction, which is equivalent to the constant deferral of meaning in language¹⁰: Aris' desire for death, as expressed through the

¹⁰Lacan argues that human desire is always mediated by signification; primary need, what is in general called instinct, transforms itself into a secondary form, desire. The object of desire relates to the way in which it is mirrored in the other. The subject imagines that the other possesses the object of his/her desire. However, since the subject can only imagine what the other may or may not possess, an imaginary possession cannot formulate a claim. Thus, desire can only be found in language, in the language of the other; since the object of desire is always absent, what the subject desires is its representation in language. (See Lacan 1977:292-325, and Gallop 1982a).

narrative of the novel *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, cannot achieve a complete negation of the boundaries that Logos enforces on individual subjectivity, because each irrevocably involves, contains, defines and secretes the other. The novel's central discursive position on the issue therefore, is quite clearly one of the futility voiced by Philippos, who says to Aris that "ακόμη κι αν καταργηθεί η γραφή, η γλώσσα, η σκέψη ή κι ό,τι άλλο φανταστείς, θα εφευρεθούν νέες μέθοδοι σήμανσης. Δεν θέλω να σε απελπίσω, φίλε μου, αλλά από τους κώδικες δεν θα σωθείς ποτέ!" (186)

The status of subjectivity, as it is worked and put into play by Efthymiadi's narrative of a personal story, is that of a process; it is not that of a product than can materialise at the end of a quest. Despite the fact that this reading has attempted to reverse the logic of the narrative, which depends on the random surfacing of Aris' memories, through an approach that starts at the beginning of the story, the text constantly pulls back from the possibility that everything will come together in the end. In so doing, this reading reinscribes preexisting contradictions, it does not produce coherence. Thus, the failure to satisfy a desire for an 'I' independent of writing and reading texts, exposes both activities as fragmentary and inconclusive.

This process implicates the function of the reader as well, because the effect on the 'I' implied by Philippos' remark about the impossibility to escape language codes, can go one step further, as another fictional character, Professor Zapp in *Small World*, has argued: "every decoding is another encoding" since

interpretation of the linguistic message is contingent on the desire of the enunciating subject who is also affected simultaneously by this very exigency: "the *it* is no longer the *it* that you started with. And for that matter, you are not the *you* that you started with"(Lodge 1985:25).

In this sense, the interpreting 'I' that reads *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* is shown to be equally dependent on, and affected by, those elements of the story on which Aris' 'I' tried to base his escape, namely, the key to the warehouse, the corpse, and the bomb, which have the same function in the narrative. They represent attempts to incorporate an external, factual and autonomous space to which both the reader and Aris may refer in order to secure the validity of their interpreting eye. The inconclusiveness of these clues, however, makes them trace-objects of a propensity in Efthymiadi's fiction, which, instead of putting a definite end to the story by appealing to an extratextual space, cancels the very possibility of an "hors-texte"(Derrida 1987:33-35).

In this sense, the 'I' becomes a fabrication of the linguistic processes of the master narratives which it seeks to escape, but on which it nevertheless depends for definition. Writing, therefore, in *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος*, figures as the sign of death, and writing about writing in this novel serves to annihilate the authorial subject position as it dissolves into fiction and subverts the status of the novel as a motivated and coherent inscription of a stable subjectivity. However, despite the

seemingly subjective paralysis that results from this refusal, the text's figuration of the subject's death by writing is nevertheless spoken from an unstable, subversive space that allows the narrative voice to resist recuperation.

AFTERWORD

In the introduction, Nancy Miller's 'language of textiles' was used both as figuration of woman's relation of production to the dominant culture, and as a critical modelling of a feminist poetics. The concept of the identity of the creative subject was shown to be construed in relation to the universal individual, the paradigm for which is male, and each of the subsequent chapters that followed has attempted to tackle the problems involved in creating a critical discourse in which to talk about women's writing, both within the field of feminist studies, and within the critical debates that have recently preoccupied literary studies in Greece.

As Luce Irigaray has argued, any theory of the 'subject' has always been appropriated by the 'masculine' (1985a). The subjectivity claimed by men and denied to women constitutes the subject as an active, reflective and complete entity which often designates itself under the name 'humanist' to establish that which is essentially the same for all humans, and which distinguishes the human from the other-than-man's world. Women in male humanist discourse have been among those others, consigned to the world of the acted-upon, of an otherness in the service of maintaining the sameness of the subject. Women's texts have been perceived along similar lines: females in patriarchal society cannot be subjects, since to be equal is to be the same (as the male), whereas to be different is to be inferior. Thus, because women as non-subjects are not in a

position to become actively involved in the creation of culture, women who write are by definition engaging in a subversive act.

However, women do write, and the subversiveness of their writing lies in that it may therefore attack hierarchy and authority where it resides in language. Through the use of man-made language patriarchal stereotypes are undermined and the notion of the male essentialist 'humanist' subject is refuted in favour of a gendered, masculine or feminine, constructed subjectivity.

Thus, the specificity of the subversive as discussed in relation to the texts analysed in this thesis, should not be understood as a form of separatism in opposition to, or in isolation from, men's writing. It is rather a mechanism for the re-negotiation of the standard discourses within Greek culture on sexuality, origins, history, language and subjectivity, testing their limits and exposing the contradictions inherent in their construction. The analysis acknowledges both the cultural specificity of the writing it reads and the limits of its own project, thereby working against the temptation to theorize the female writing identity in terms of global generalizations that always exclude.

The use of 'women' in the title of the thesis is put forward as a linguistic rather than a natural kind of classification, and therefore the definition of a woman who writes becomes subject to positioning, because as Linda Alcoff argues "when the concept 'woman' is defined not by a particular set of attributes but by a particular position, the internal characteristics of the person

thus identified are not denoted so much as the external context within which that person is situated"(1988:433). Thus, the subversive difference of women's writing does not argue for a singularity or universality, but for its configuration as a gendered process that derives from a politics of enunciation that concerns itself with who speaks, to whom, from where and to what end. Since gender difference is presented as a difference in language, the limits of the totalizing efforts both of males and females, who attempt to discover and fix the notion of 'woman', are refuted in favour of kinds of writing that account for difference and diversity as positive and empowering.

Support for the assertion by Rea Galanaki that "η γυναίκα συγγραφέας μπορεί αυτή η ίδια, να παράγει μια διαφορετική μορφή του μύθου της"(Galanaki,1982:367) is offered through a transformation of the old myths as shown by the texts discussed. Through readings of texts that strategically engage themselves with cultural values in order to deconstruct their representations, it is demonstrated that these texts collectively attack or subvert the implication that sexual difference is primary. As the concept of identity is more or less explicitly shown within the texts to be constituted in and by language, the notion of a subversive 'translation' of sexual difference into literary difference becomes, therefore, a relevant and empowering distinction. As Jane Gallop has argued, "translation like metaphor, is imbued with the difference within, for it is never simply itself but must represent another text and thus includes another within its identity"(1982:803). Therefore the

texts discussed may be read as revisions of the old stories of the mythology of difference, and so provide figurations of a different and enabling mythology. Thus, the readings of the subversive narratives discussed do not lay claim to a new, original, female identity but only a gendered 'translation' of the creating subject that may provide the transformation of the official patriarchal narratives.

The manipulation of identifications between narrator, author, and reader, along with the representation of memory and the past in these texts, formulates gendered identity as a constantly shifting effect of language. Since the texts discussed in this thesis take the writing process as part of their subject matter, their performance can be characterized as an oscillation that never rests in affirmation or reaction. The self-conscious style of the subversiveness of contemporary Greek women's fiction can be construed as a politics equally applicable to the function of the reader. It is precisely through the dis-covering of a gendered subjectivity embodied in writing, that the weaving of different versions of the myth of 'woman' manifests its desire for change. It is a change that, in the process of engendering the writing subject, simultaneously engenders the reading subject as well, enabling a feminist approach to women's writing that derives from an awareness of what it means to speak as a gendered subject, from both within and outside the dominant ideology of gender.¹

¹For the significance of the terms gender and engender see Footnote 10 on page

The narrative of "Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά" engenders its readers by de-naturalizing the processes by which narratives construct sexual difference according to the logic of domination. *Ο Υπνοβάτης* presents the text as a site of an intertextual disorderly and multiple condition. When the non-principles of sleepwalking are metaphorically transposed into the concept of intertextuality, they engender the reading activity as a signifier for an infinite intertextual promenade, which disturbs the traditional notions of authenticity, priority, singularity, uniqueness, autonomy, and subverts the idea of the Origin and, consequently, the idea of the Fall as well.

Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά engenders the reader in a process through which fictional and personal experience as well as historical and public performance is politicised along with subjectivity and nationality. *Αλμα* adds to the above by presenting a concept of gendered subjectivity and identity as constructed by, and as caught with, the reader, in the web of language. *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* further explores the relationship between subjectivity and textuality; by focusing on the relation of the subject to the text, and by questioning the existence of a fixed, knowable reality, it subverts the notion of the individual writing and reading subject as well as the individual text as free, unified, coherent and consistent. Thus, the subversive engendering of the creative subject position, be it reader, writer

or text, as read in the aforementioned texts, is portrayed more as a process put into play by narratives that tell personal stories from the past, than as a product that rests at the end of a quest.

"Περσινή Αρραβωνιαστικιά", *Ο Υπνοβάτης*, *Ο Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίκ Πασά*, *Αλμα* and *Το Χρώμα του Μέλλοντος* all derive their stories from the past in one way or another. However, this sexual, theological, historical or linguistic past, as recollected in the respective narratives, displays no nostalgia for the lost lover, origin, land, language or self; it is not revisited through a desire for return to the transcendental space of an original order. As these five texts recognize the importance of the past but subvert the primacy and guarantee of its properties, they can be defined in terms of L. Hutcheon's 'historiographic metafiction' (1988), that is as fictions which acknowledge that the reality of the past is accessible only through its textualization, which, opened up to the present, prevents it from being conclusive and teleological.

By bringing attention to woman's position within systems for the production of discourse, and by engendering the creative subject, the readings proposed here display a tendency against nostalgia, against a vision of an idealized past in which issues of sexual difference are unaffected by questions that show these differences as unrelated to ideology and culture. The sexual, theological, historical, linguistic and subjective past in the five texts discussed is not presented as a myth realized through fiction. It is rather used to question cultural truths and to

expose them as constructions of the same discursive system that guarantees the eternal truth of fixed sexual difference. The engendering of the writing subject subverts the possibility of alluding to a pre-cultural space in the past where women, originally and by nature, functioned as the guardians of the psychic as well as linguistic stability of masculine creations, of which the myth of 'woman' is another manifestation. Moreover, in showing how language constructs instead of merely reflecting reality, these texts subvert the function of the male or female as a stable referent, and by showing how myths are affected by the conditions of cultural discourse, the subversive possibilities of these texts further undermine nostalgia. By engendering the creative subject, the fictions of contemporary Greek women writers, sifted through feminist critical theory, leave "cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity in play, rather than in place"(Doane, Hodges,1987:142), where gender can no longer be conceived as a quality owned by individuals but rather as a system of meaning.

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